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Our SAVIOUR'S
DIVINE
SERMON
ON THE
MOUNT,

CONTAIN'D
In the Vth, VIth, and VIIth Chapters of
St. MATTHEW'S Gospel,

EXPLAINED:

And the Practice of it Recommended in divers
SERMONS and DISCOURSES.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

To which is prefix'd,

A PARAPHRASE on the whole
SERMON on the MOUNT:

And Two Copious Indexes annex'd; one of the Scriptures
explain'd, the other of the particular Heads treated of in
the Work.

By JAMES BLAIR, M. A.

Commissary of *Virginia*, President of *William and Mary*
College, and Rector of *Williamsburgh* in that Colony.

The SECOND EDITION.

WITH

A Recommendatory Preface by the Reverend
Dr. WATERLAND.

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THE
PREFACE
TO THIS
NEW EDITION.

THE worthy Author living (if he yet lives). at too great a Distance to attend this Edition, or to give it a new *Preface*, I was desired to take that small Trouble upon me: Which I do with the more Pleasure, partly, out of a grateful Respect to a Person by whose pious and learned Labours I have been so agreeably instructed; and partly, to excite others to give them the more serious and careful Perusal. I should have been glad to have had it in my Power to oblige the Publick with some Account of the Life and Character of this good Man: Who while he has shined abroad, in a far distant Land, has been but a little known here; except it be by these his *printed Works*,

A 2

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Works, which appear to be a fair and full Portraiture of his Mind. As to the rest, all that I can at present learn, will lie within a very small Compass. He was born and bred in *Scotland*; and was ordained and beneficed in the *Episcopal* Church there: But meeting with some Discouragements, under an unsettled State of Affairs, and having a Prospect of discharging his ministerial Function more usefully elsewhere, he quitted his Preferments there, and came over into *England*, some time in the latter End of King *Charles the Second's* Reign. It was not long before he was taken notice of by the then Bishop of *London* (*Dr. Compton*) who prevailed with him to go as *Missionary* (about the Year 1685) into *Virginia*: where by his regular Conversation, exemplary Conduct, and unwearied Labours in the Work of the Ministry, he did good Service to Religion, and gain'd to himself a good Report amongst all: So that the same Bishop *Compton*, being well apprized of his true and great Worth, made choice of him, about the Year 1689, as his *Commissary* for *Virginia*; a very weighty

weighty and creditable Post, the highest Office in the Church there: Which, however, did not take him off from his Pastoral Care, but only render'd him the more shining Example of it, to all the other Clergy within that Colony.

While his Thoughts were wholly intent upon doing good in his Office, he observed with true Concern, that the *Want* of *Schools*, and proper Seminaries for Religion and Learning, was such a Damp upon all great Attempts for the Propagation of the Gospel, that little could be hoped for, without first removing that Obstacle. Therefore he formed a vast Design of erecting and endowing a College in *Virginia*, at *Williamsburgh*, the Capital of that Country, for Professors and Students in *Academical* Learning. In order thereto, he had himself set on foot a voluntary Subscription, amounting to a great Sum: and not content with that, he came over into *England*, in the Year 1693, to solicit the Affair at Court. The good *Queen* (Queen *Mary*) was so well pleased with the noble Design, that she espoused it with a parti-

cular Zeal; and King *William* also, as soon as he became acquainted with its Use and Excellency, very readily concurred with the *Queen* in it. Accordingly, a Patent passed for the Erecting and Endowing a College, called from the Founders, *The William and Mary College*: And Mr. *Blair*, who had had the principal Hand in laying, and solliciting, and concerting the Design, was appointed *President* of the College.^a Our Author, it seems, has now been a *Minister* of the Gospel 58 Years, or thereabouts; a *Missionary* 54 Years; *Commissary* 50 Years; and *President* of the College about 46: A faithful Labourer in God's Vineyard, from first to last; an Ornament to his *Profession* and his several *Offices*, and now in a good old Age, hourly waiting for (if not, before this, gone to enjoy) the *High Prize* of his Calling.

As to the Discourses here following, they had the Advantage of being composed

^a See some Account of this Matter in Bishop *Burnet's* History of his own Time, Vol. II. p. 119. And in Dr. *Humphreys's* Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, p. 9, 10, 11.

posed at a mature Age, after a *Course* of serious *Studies*, after much *Experience* in the Work of the Ministry, after wide and large Observations made upon Men and Things; and, in short, after an improved, experimental Knowledge gained in the School of Christ. They had their *first Impression* in the Year 1722; drawn into publick Light by the repeated Importunities of several worthy *Prelates*, and other *Clergy* of our Church, (who had perused a *few* of them in Manuscript) and by the particular Encouragement of the then Metropolitan, Archbishop *Wake*, and of Dr. *Robinson* then Bishop of *London*, to whom the Sermons were *dedicated*. When that Impression was gone off, and Copies were become very scarce, the Executors of the late Rev^d Dr. *Bray* (to whom the Author had previously transferred his Copy-right) thought of a *new Impression*, and communicated their Design to the worthy Author: Who accordingly, in the Year 1732, revised the Work, corrected the *Errata* of the *Press*, added Indexes of *Texts* and *Matters*, and prepared a *new*

vj *The Preface to this New Edition.*

Dedication, address'd to *The Right Reverend Father in God, EDMUND Lord Bishop of London.* How the Edition then intended came to be retarded till this Time, I know not; neither is it of Moment to enquire: It is well that now at last, the Publick once more enjoys this valuable Treasure of *sound Divinity, of practical Christianity.* But when I say *Practical*, let no one be so weak as to take that for a *diminutive* Expression; which is indeed the highest and brightest Commendation that a *Work* can have; whether we look at the intrinsick *Use* and *Value* of it, or at the real *Difficulties* of performing it to a degree of Exactness, or at the Talents requisite for it. A Man bred up in the *Schools*, or conversant only with Books, may be able to write *Systems*, or to discuss *Points*, in a clear and accurate Manner: But That and more is required in an *able Guide*, a compleat *practical Divine*, who undertakes to bring down the most important Truths to the Level of a *popular Audience*; to adapt them properly to *Times, Persons* and *Circumstances*; to guard them against *latent* Prejudices,

Prejudices, and *secret* Subterfuges; and lastly, to inforce them with a becoming Earnestness, and with all the prudent Ways of Insinuation and Address. A Person must have some Knowledge of *Men*, besides That of *Books*, to succeed well here; and must have a kind of *practical Sagacity* (which nothing but the Grace of God, joined with Recollection and wise Observation, can bring) to be able to represent Christian Truths to the Life, or to any considerable degree of Advantage.

As to the Subject here made Choice of, it is the highest and the noblest that could be, *viz.* our Lord's *Divine* Sermon on the Mount: And as it is here explained with *good Judgment*, so it appears likewise to be pressed with *due Force*; in a clear and easy, but yet masculine Style, equally fitted to the Capacities of *common* Christians, and to the improved Understandings of the *knowing* and judicious. One peculiar Commendation must, I believe, be allowed to our Author, that he happily hit upon a *new Key* (which Divines before him had not thought on) for the fuller opening the Occasion, the Views, the retired
Meaning

Meaning and Connexion of our Lord's *Divine* Sermon. Not that the *Thought*, with Respect to the Jewish Expectations of a *Temporal Kingdom*, was at all *new*: But the *Application* of it to this Case, and the *Use* made of it for the unravelling some of the darker Parts of our Lord's Discourse, and the clearing their Coherence; That was *new*, and appears to be of excellent Service: Particularly, in the *Eight Beatitudes*, (for the setting every one of them upon a *distinct* Foot, and not running several of them, too confusedly, one into another) as also in several other Texts.

But to return; our Author has, in my Opinion, very aptly joined the *Commentator*, *Preacher* and *Casuiſt* all in one: And I cannot but approve the *Example* he has himself given, and the *Model* which he has so handsomly recommended to others,^a for the *Composition* of *Sermons*. It is extremely proper, that the *Text* and the *Sermon* should not appear as *Strangers* to each other, but rather
as

^a In his *Dedication* to Bishop Robinson, and his *Preface*.

as near *Kindred*, discovering the same *Features*; that so the Discourse itself may almost point out to discerning Judges from what place of Scripture it derived its Birth. This is certainly right in the general; but is yet so to be understood as to leave room for *excepted* Cases, where Excursions may be *needful* on account of some *special* Occasion, Season, Circumstances, &c. and where any decent Handle for a neat *Transition* may prudently and properly be taken. But I cannot say any thing better, or so well upon this Head, as the Author himself has done in the *Dedication* and *Preface* before referred to, and therefore I dismiss it, and proceed.

One Particular I cannot forbear to take notice of (which an attentive Reader may often observe in the Course of these *Sermons*) how happy a Talent the Author had in deciding Points of great Moment, in a very few and plain Words, but the Result of *deep Consideration*, and discovering a great *Compass* of *Thought*. I shall single out a few Instances only, from among many, for a *Taste* to the Reader.

Of

Of the Value of good Works.

“ I am apprehensive, that by our unwary Confutation of the *Popish* Errors concerning *Merit* and *Supererogation*, we have too much depreciated good *Works* themselves: Whereas it is most certain, they ought to be highly had in Estimation; not only as the genuine *Signs* and *Fruits* of a lively Faith, but as necessary *Conditions* of *Salvation*; and not only of *Salvation*, but of our *Growth in Grace*, and of our *Advancement to higher Degrees* of *Glory*.^a”

Here, very briefly, and justly, is pointed out a dangerous *Extreme*, with the Rise and Occasion of it, and the proper Cure for it, or Correction of it.

For the justifying the Term *Conditions*, the Reader, who has any Scruple, may consult Bishop *Bull* in his *Harmonia*, &c. and Bishop *Stillingfleet* in his Answers to Mr. *Lobb*. Our Author says That and more, improving and enforcing the same Thought with two very pertinent and weighty Considerations.

What

^a Vol. I. Sermon xxi. p. 374.

What makes a good Work.

“ To make any Work a *good Work*, it
“ must be 1. *Lawful* in itself. 2. *Suit-*
“ *able* to our *Station* and *Circumstances*
“ in the World. 3. *Designed* for promo-
“ ting something that is good for the *Ser-*
“ *vice* of God, for the *good* of our *Neigh-*
“ *bour*, or the *Salvation* of our own *Souls*.
“ 4. Something within the *Reach* of our
“ own *Talents* and *Abilities*. If it wants
“ any of these *Conditions*, it cannot be one
“ of those *good Works* meant in my Text.^a
He goes on to explain the several Parti-
culars at large, in a very clear and
just Manner. A *good Work* might
have been more briefly *defined*: but it
could not have been more wisely, or more
distinctly *guarded* against every Evasion
and Illusion of *Self-flattery*; whereby
many are persuaded that they are doing
good Works, while they are really doing
Works of Darkness.

Of

^a Vol. I. Sermon. xxxi. p. 506.

Of False Prophets.

“ I cannot believe, that they are all
 “ *wicked* Men in their *Hearts* and *Lives*,
 “ who are infected with any heretical,
 “ dangerous Doctrine. It is probable,
 “ the *Sheeps-cloathing* may extend farther
 “ than the bare *hypocritical* outward
 “ Shew, even to the *good Habits* of the
 “ Mind, and a *regular Course* of Life:
 “ By which they are much better fur-
 “ nished and qualified to give a *Credit* to
 “ their *false* Doctrines. - - - - But now
 “ here seems to be prescribed a plain,
 “ easy Way of discerning *false* Teachers
 “ from *true*, and a Way which lies level
 “ to the *meanest* Capacity: It is only by
 “ observing the *Fruits*, and *Consequents*
 “ of every Doctrine, what it is *apt* to
 “ *produce* where it is thoroughly suck’d
 “ in and believed, and then judging how
 “ far those Fruits *resemble* the Doctrine
 “ and Spirit of *Christianity*.^a

Of

^a Vol. IV. p. 249, 274.

Of Enthusiasm.

“ The *Spirit* of God having given us
“ a *clear* Rule to walk by (namely, the
“ Rule of the *holy Scriptures*) whatsoe-
“ ver Preacher shall deliver any Doctrine,
“ either in the general *disparaging* the
“ *Holy Scriptures* and preferring *Enthu-*
“ *siasm*, or in particular setting up the *pri-*
“ *vate Spirit* to assert any Thing *contrary*
“ thereto; it requires no great Depth of
“ Learning to observe, that such Do-
“ ctine *strikes* at the *Root* of all *revealed*
“ *Religion*; and opens a Door for the
“ *Destruction* of it.^b Here, the *secret*
Views, or *remote* Tendency of all *Enthu-*
siasm is briefly laid open. *Enthusi-*
asm, in the bad Sense, appears to be a
subtile Device of *Satan*, upon *ill-meaning*,
or *unmeaning* Instruments, (making Use
of their *Ambition*, *Self-admiration*, or
other *Weakness*) to draw them by some
plausible Suggestions into a vain Conceit
that they have something *within* them,
either of *equal* Authority with Scripture,
or

^b Vol. IV. p. 274.

or *superior* to it:^c And when once they have thus got loose from that *divine Restraint*, under a Pretence of *divine Impulses*, then there is nothing so *wild*, or *extravagant*, that those free Rangers, following their own new Lights, are not capable of.

I shall conclude this *Preface* with recommending a few seasonable Reflections to the Consideration of serious and conscientious Christians amongst us.

1. One is, how particularly happy they may think themselves, in their having three several Sets of excellent Discourses^d on our Lord's *divine Sermon*, in their *own Language*, (such perhaps as are not to be met with in any other) and in their constantly living under the Care and Direction

^c They will not perhaps directly say, that their *private Spirit* is of Authority *superior* to that of *Scripture*: But they often make it so in effect, more ways than one: 1. By making the Scripture submit to be *judged of* by the private Spirit, and not the private Spirit by the Scripture. 2. By making the Guidance of the private Spirit to *superfede* even the *reading*, or the *Use* of the Scripture, after a Time, when supposed perfect enough not to need any longer the *Help* of the *written Word*. 3. By setting up a Pretence of *Infallibility* in a Man's private Breast, warranting him to substitute his own *Interpretations*, in the room of the *Divine Laws*.

^d Besides Mr. Blair's, there is also Bishop Blackhall's, and Mr. Gardiner's.

on of faithful Guides, judicious and *well-studied Divines*: For, Those at last are, *under God*, in the Use of *his Word*, the safest Counsellors they can have to confide in. Let those who boast of *Divine Impulses*, or *immediate Inspirations*, bring together all the choice Things they can meet with, that have been invented and uttered by those of *their Way*, for seventeen Centuries, and see whether they are at all fit to be compared, or named with the weighty and solid Compositions of the judicious and *well-read Divines*, early and late: who yet have pretended to no more than the *ordinary Assistances* of the *Holy Spirit*, in the Use of God's *written Word*, and of other *outward Means*, of divine providential Appointment, without any direct, *immediate Inspiration* at all. What then has the *good Spirit* been doing for his supposed *Favourites*, all the time? Or rather, What has not some *evil Spirit* been doing, through a long Tract of Centuries, in seducing many, to father *Satan's Suggestions*, or their own *weak Fancies*, upon the *Blessed Spirit* of God?

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2. It may be of Use to every serious Christian, wisely to consider, how many different Kinds of Instruments the *Tempter* commonly makes use of, to corrupt their *Faith*, or to debauch their *Morals*. They are reducible to *Three* Kinds, 1. *Open* Enemies to God and Religion. 2. *Disguised* Enemies, Hypocrites under a *feigned* Covert of Friends. 3. *Well-meaning*, but injudicious, indiscreet Friends; Friends *in Heart*, but rashly and undesignedly doing the *Work* of *Enemies*. All these must be carefully guarded against, in their Turns, as Occasions happen, by as many as *love not* to be *deceived*, or really *love* their *own Souls*. For, if any Man suffers himself to be deluded, or led aside, when he may avoid it; it signifies little whether it was by the *rude* Attacks of one, or by the smooth *Hypocrisy* and *Treachery* of another, or by the *Weakness* or *Madness* of a Third. The Fault is, to be *misled* at all, so far as may be prevented: And the Rule of Scripture is, to stand firm and stedfast in *true Doctrine* and *holy Life*, against all *Seducers*, of what Kind soever, and
never

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never to be *mised* by any. But what I have here briefly hinted, is pursued at large, and to much greater Advantage, in the following Discourses, from which I shall no longer detain the Reader.

WINDSOR.

Decemb. 24. 1739.

Daniel Waterland.



To the Right Reverend Father in God,

J O H N,

Lord Bishop of *London*.

My LORD,

HAVING had the Honour for above these Thirty Years to bear a Commission under your Lordship, and your Worthy Predecessor; and the Happiness likewise to have been as long supported by your just and generous Protection and Encouragement; I do most gladly lay hold on this publick Opportunity of acknowledging to the World, the many Obligations of Gratitude I lie under to such truly Good and Noble Patrons. But this is but One of the Many Reasons that induce me to prefix your Lordship's Name to these Discourses, and to submit them to your Judgment, and to pray your Acceptance and Encouragement of them. Being entrusted under your Lordship with a Cure of Souls in a far distant Country, where both Clergy and Laity are deprived of the Benefit your Diocese in *England* enjoys under your more immediate Episcopal Inspection, I thought nothing could be more proper than to present your Lordship with a Specimen of our

(a 3) remote

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remote Ministerial Labours. To pass by other Reasons for my Choice of this noble Subject; it is a particular Felicity of that Country, not to be infested with the Enemies of the Christian Faith; so that we have little or no Occasion in our Sermons to enter the Lists with *Atheists, Deists, Arians* or *Socinians*; nor are we much troubled with either *Popish* or *Protestant* Recusants; or any of those unhappy Distinctions, by which the Church of *England* is most unfortunately subdivided in this our Mother Country. Yet we find Work enough (and more than our few Labourers can accomplish) to encounter the usual Corruptions of Mankind, Ignorance, Inconsideration, practical Unbelief, Impenitence, Impiety, Worldly-mindedness, and other common Immoralities. For which Reason, the Practical Part of Religion being the chief Part of our Pastoral Care, I was easily inclined to fix my Meditations on *Our Saviours Divine Sermon on the Mount*; as knowing that Christian Duties were there both very plainly taught, and yet carried to a Degree of Perfection beyond what the World ever knew before, or is perhaps as yet duly sensible of. It pleased God to favour my Study on this noble Subject with some very useful Discoveries, which cast a better Light both into the Scope of the whole Sermon; and the Meaning and Order of the great Duties it treats of. And I made it my Business to apply all with as great a Degree of Zeal and Concern for the good of Souls as I was capable of. I hope the Doctrine will be found Sound and Orthodox, and the Style plain for the Use of the meanest Hearers. I wish I could add likewise, and so Grave and
Serious,

Serious, so Rousing and awakening, so Weighty and Divine, and so becoming the Noble Argument it handles; that Persons of the best Capacities and Dispositions may find a suitable Entertainment: But such as it is, I hope it will do good to Persons of all Capacities, if they bring any Degree of good Temper of Mind along with them.

There is one Thing more I have aimed at, with an Eye to the Clergy, as well as the Laity under my Care; but am conscious to myself of having fallen far short of it; it is something relating to the Manner of handling Divine Subjects. I cannot forbear mentioning it, though there is but a weak Attempt made here towards it; but if duly cultivated and improved, I will venture to say it will be a great Beauty and Ornament of our Pulpit Performances. What I mean is, that I have endeavoured not only to avoid the running out into general Topicks, to spend the Time; but to confine the Discourses to the main Subjects of the several Texts; and so to cloath every Discourse with the true Notion of its Text, that nothing may be said upon it but what is in some Sense peculiar to it; and would not fall in so properly from any other. I have always looked upon it as a Thing of mighty Importance, that our People should be satisfied, we do not preach up our own Notions, but those of the *Holy Scriptures*; which carry their Light and Authority along with them. This Method, it's true, makes Sermons very short, by cutting off long Prefaces, useless Digressions, Common-Place Cases and Questions, remote Repetitions *ab Ovo*; and some other Pulpit Excursions, where, perhaps, though the

Matter is good, it is not so well suited to the Text, from whence it should derive its Authority. But this Brevity I think is far from being any Inconveniency in those Performances; for all such Things as are foreign to the Subject, serve only to bury the true Oar of Divine Truths in Heaps of Rubbish, which would be much more useful, and perhaps more acceptable too, if it were to appear in its own native Splendor. If still this is thought too great a Restraint to the Fancy in our Compositions, it is easily remedied by taking a longer Text, which will supply the barrenest Invention much better, than by racking our Brains to suit Impertinent Matter to a Subject to which it does not belong. But the Judgment of all this, as well as of several other uncommon Observations on this excellent Subject, tending to the clearer Explication of the Meaning, and the opening up of the Design and Method of it, is with profound Reverence submitted to your Lordship, and the other Fathers of the Church: Some of whom, to whose Sentiments we owe the greatest Deference, having vouchsafed to peruse a few of these Discourses, did so earnestly advise the Publication of them, that I could not resist them, as I had done the Impor-tunity of some of my other good Friends of the inferior Clergy. I wish their favourable Opinion of the Usefulness of the Performance, may be answered in a more diligent Consideration and Practice of Christian Morals, and in the Revival of the true Spirit of Christianity, which alas, is so visibly decayed in all Parts of the World. And as this was my principal Design in composing these Discourses, God grant I
may

may so transcribe them into my own Heart and Life, that while I preach the Gospel to others, I myself may not be a cast-away.

If these Discourses prove any Way serviceable to the Publick, I must acknowledge the Leisure and Freedom of Mind I enjoyed in composing them, was very much owing to your Lordship's Favour; being thereby delivered from the Anxiety that might attend encumbered Circumstances, and in a Condition to apply my Thoughts more closely to Divine Subjects. That God may water with his Blessing the Studies and Labours of all your Lordship's numerous Clergy, particularly of those who have devoted their Service to the Cultivation of that more neglected Part of the Lord's Vineyard, our foreign Plantations in *America*, where though the Harvest is Great, the Labourers are but Few; is the hearty Prayer of

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most Humble,

most Obedient and most Obliged,

Servant and Commissary,

James Blair.

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Handwritten text, mostly illegible due to fading. The text appears to be organized into several paragraphs, with some lines starting with capital letters. There are some red ink marks or stains on the page.

To the Right Reverend Father in GOD,

E D M U N D

Lord Bishop of *London*.

Williamsburgh, June 2. 1732.

My LORD,

U Nderstanding that the Executors of the late Reverend and Zealous Dr. *Thomas Bray* (to whom in his Life-time I had transferred my Right) design a new Impression of my Explication of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, which I dedicated to your Lordship's Predecessor, my then Diocesan; the same Work comes now naturally to beg your Lordship's Protection, who have so worthily filled that most illustrious and important Station. It is my Misfortune, that being so far absent in a remote Corner of the World, I am deprived of the good Advice of my Lord of *Canterbury*, who encouraged the first Impression, and of some other of the learned Prelates and Pastors of the Church of *England*, with whom I have the Honour to be particularly acquainted; who, upon this Occasion, would have communicated their Opinions and Censures, and so have made the Work more valuable by their Corrections and Amendments than I can now pretend to. For, except that it has the Addition of two useful;

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and

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and pretty accurate Indexes, one of the Scriptures, the other of the Matters explained, and the Errors of the Press corrected, I have altered nothing from the first Impression. But especially, both on account of your Lordship's Authority over me, and your known Learning and Ability to direct in these sacred Subjects, I would have depended on your Lordship's Judgment in those Points in which Interpreters do differ, and in many of which I have taken the Freedom to adventure on some new Solutions of the Difficulties which occurred in my Explication of that noble Subject. While your Lordship employs your far greater Talents with so great Success against the Enemies of the Christian Faith, I hope it will prove an Endeavour no way foreign to that noble Design, but fitly subservient to it, to represent that Faith in so true a Light, that if these Gentlemen will open their Eyes, they may see and be convinced, that it is far from that hideous Scheme they have formed to themselves, and highly consonant to the Doctrine of the best Interpreters of the Law of Nature. I am persuaded, if they were well acquainted with the Spirit and Temper of our Lord Jesus Christ, even so much of it as is to be learned from this Sermon on the Mount, and had their Minds withal rightly disposed with honest and virtuous Inclinations, they could not but see how much the Christian Doctrine conduces to the sanctifying of Men's Hearts, and the Amendment of their Lives, and the general Peace and Happiness of the World; besides the noble Principles it lays down, and the Provision it makes for a glorious Immortality. But, I doubt, till the Advocates
for

for Infidelity can be persuaded in good earnest to set about the Amendment of their Lives, the best Arguments for Christianity will avail but little upon them; while they do not endeavour to bring up their Lives to the Christian Principles, it is no great wonder if they strive to bring down their Principles to their Lives. May your Lordship go on with Success in the Service of the Christian Faith; and may the numerous Clergy, over whom you preside, animated with your good Conduct and Example, adorn their holy Profession with an exemplary Care and Diligence both in their Life and Doctrine.

My Lord, as I am now, I believe, the oldest of all the Plantation Missionaries, and have endeavoured, I hope, to lay a good Foundation of practical Christianity in these remote Parts of the World; I think myself obliged to acknowledge, with all Gratitude, the Countenance and Support I have all along had, during my seven and forty Years Ministry in this Country, from the eminent Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of *England*; more particularly from your Lordship, and your worthy Predecessors; in whose Service, as Commissary, this is now the Forty-third Year my poor Labour has been employed. It is time for me to be an *emeritus Miles*; O that I could say with St. Paul, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* I am,

My LORD,

*Your Lordship's most humble, most obedient,
and most obliged Servant and Commissary,*

James Blair.

P R E F A C E.

SOME, I doubt not, will think it very strange, after the Labours of so many, both Ancient and Modern Commentators on this excellent Sermon on the Mount, that an obscure Person, and from an obscure Corner of the World, should pretend to any further Discoveries on so well cultivated a Subject. It may reasonably be presumed; that all such a one can say must be the same Thing over again, perhaps with a little new Turn of Thought, and Variation of Method and Expression. This I confess is frequently the Case with Writers on the Holy Scriptures, and therefore I must expect, upon this Presumption, the far greater Part of Students, and others, will never so much as vouchsafe to look into these Writings. But if they do, they will quickly be undeceived; insomuch that I am afraid they will then accuse me of a contrary Error, namely of giving myself too much Liberty to step out of the common Road; and will be perfectly surprized in such a practical Part of Scripture, where one might expect all Things plain, and no Room left for different Interpretations, to find so many Things that have a new Air, and do really in many Points give a different View of this Text, from the Generality of those that have hitherto past upon the World. This has been no small Matter of Admiration to myself in these Meditations; and I shall endeavour to give some Account of it to my ingenuous Reader, supposing him to be such a one,
whole

whose Understanding is not strongly byassed by any Party; far less by an implicit Faith, so bound up to their Sentiments, as to think it a Fault upon good Reasons to differ from them. For though it is confessed that this is a very practical Portion of Scripture, as any is in the whole Bible; I cannot grant that the Practical Parts of Scripture are all so plain, that he who runs may read them. It is necessary for apprehending the Meaning of Them, as well as of Texts of Controversy; that the original Phrases be rightly understood, together with the Coherence and Connexion of the Words; and the Scope and Design of the whole Discourse. Let any Man try it, not only in the Holy Scriptures, but in any other ancient Author, and he shall find that it requires a good deal of Pains to find out the Scope, and of Skill and Attention, to apprehend the right Sense and Meaning. As far as I have had Opportunity to observe, of all the Texts of Scripture, it is the Practical ones which want the most Industry and Diligence to cultivate and improve them: For besides Skill in Languages and Criticisms, there is a suitable Frame of Heart, and an experimental Knowledge of the Christian Virtues in the Life and Conversation, requisite to the right apprehending of them: And how rarely are these two, this and Criticism I mean, in Conjunction? And yet both very necessary for understanding aright the great Duties of the Gospel? Our Adversaries too have driven us to a nice Search into the Meaning of Texts of Controversy: But we have often, I doubt, allowed our selves a greater Latitude in practical Texts, where we had no Enemy to fear, and have been much less upon our Guard; especially where it has been the Custom to Lecture daily upon great Portions of Scripture

Scripture (as was the Custom of some of our Reformers:) This has laid Men under the Temptation of taking for the true Sense whatever presented itself first to their Thoughts; having no Time to enquire curiously and nicely into the Difficulties that occurred, which would have often required a Week's hard Study to clear one or two of them; whereas they have slightly run over twenty of them in an Hour's time. Some have done yet worse; adventuring purely ex tempore in their Houses or Churches to expound or lecture, and in their Lectures to speak whatever came first into their Thoughts, taking that for the Suggestion of God's Holy Spirit. And it is not to be believed, where Men have thus, right or wrong, suddenly or premeditatedly uttered their Opinion, how stiffly they adhere to it; and what a Bias they give thereby, to all that are governed by their Authority and Example. I have really been amazed to see what a mighty Influence one great Name has had, to obtrude some of his crudest and least studied Interpretations upon whole Churches, not only of that, but of the succeeding Generations. If it has been my Fortune to discover many of these rash Interpretations, and at last finding how often Commentators have been misled with Names and Authority; if I have found it necessary to take nothing upon Trust, but to examine Matters with Diligence, and without Prejudice or Partiality; and if upon this Score I am sometimes singular in my Thoughts, and leaving the common Road, have sprung some new Game; while every thing advanced is sound and orthodox, and has a good Tendency to Piety; I hope I shall not, for so doing, incur the Censure of the learned World; but rather deserve their Thanks, for helping to extricate them from the Power and Prevalency

valency of vulgar Errors ; and for retrieving some very useful Truths, which I humbly submit to the equitable Judgment of all, who have any Genius for these sacred Studies ; being not only willing, but desirous that the same Freedom, which I have used with others, may be used with me ; and that nothing I have here advanced may have any further Credit, than the Grounds and Reasons of it (which I have always taken care to set down, as often as I differ from others) will justify and support. The chief Thing I have aimed at, and hope in some measure to have attained, is a just and true Explanation of the literal Sense of the Words, and the giving right Notions of the Christian Duties therein described, with a serious Recommendation of the Practice of them. Though I have been large, especially on some less cultivated Subjects, the Reader will find I have not allowed myself the least Liberty of wandering from the Text, or of running out into the Common-Place. I have occasionally explained divers other Texts, where I found they cast Light upon what I had under my Consideration. And in the whole have, I think, observed many things, which are usually over-look'd, tending to a fuller and clearer Opening of this excellent Treasure of Christian Morals. One thing further it may be necessary to advertise, is, that after these Sermons were composed and preached, the Labours of the late Learned Bishop of Exeter on the same Subject came to be published : So that I hope the Reader will not think it strange, that nothing is borrowed from that Work ; and will believe, that where this Performance rejects some of those Opinions there espoused, I could have no Eye to that Right Reverend Author, or any the least Design to disparage his Work, which was

then in his own Closet, and to me utterly unknown. I need not add, that the Sermons being designed for a plain Country Auditory, without any Thoughts at that Time of publishing them to the World; the Reader is to expect no further Excellency in the Style than Plainness and Perspicuity. If through the Blessing of God, they prove any way useful to cast Light on that admirable Portion of Holy Scripture, the Sermon on the Mount; and especially to recommend the great Christian Duties therein contained, I have my Aim: Let God have the Glory. I hope too I shall gain another Point, which will richly answer all my Labour, and is indeed the chief Design of this Preface, which is, that from the Experiment here made, Students will be convinced that the practical Subjects of the Holy Scriptures are so far from being as yet exhausted by the Commentators, and other Writers upon them, that there are very extraordinary Gleanings left, or rather a plentiful Harvest still, to reward the Pains of the diligent and impartial Inquirer, who will take the Courage to throw off the Chains of Custom, and to betake himself to his fervent Prayers and vigorous Endeavours to find out the Truth. Think not that I am recommending any Thing of Fancy or Enthusiasm; there is no Man further from it; for I know not any thing that has made more bad Interpretations of Scripture than that has done. What I recommend is only the keeping the Mind in a good Temper; and a more careful Study of the Scripture it self, especially of those neglected Hints of the Context, which often serve for Keys to open up the whole Discourse, to which they are annexed; to one of which discovering the Occasion of this Sermon, not as yet taken notice of by any Interpreter that I
have

The P R E F A C E. xxxiiij

have seen, and to another, concerning the proper Auditors of it, observed but by a few; I owe my chief Assistance in the Explication I have given of the several Beatitudes, and the other Parts of this Divine Sermon. What these are is opened in the Three first Discourses; to which I refer: Praying for a right Understanding to my Readers in all Things; and that they may take in good Part my sincere Endeavour to cast Light on this excellent Portion of Holy Scripture. From the Discoveries and Improvements here made, I hope some better Pens will adventure in the like Manner on the Explication of other practical Parts of Holy Writ, which from Experience I think I dare promise them will richly quit cost; and that if they will plow with the same Heifer, they shall find out many Things which have hitherto lain hid in the Riddles of Darkness and Error.

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A

PARAPHRASE

O N

Our Saviour's SERMON on the MOUNT.

M A T. vth, vith and viith Chapters.

C H A P. V.

V. I. *And † seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.*

2. *And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,*

† Or, looking upon,
see Mark viii. 33.

VERSE 1 and 2. By this time *Jesus* had acquired great Fame; the People being prepared for the Reception of him by *John the Baptist*, who had pointed him out as *the Messiah*; and his own wonderful Doctrine and Miracles, persuading a great many that observed them, that he was that Great King foretold by the Prophets; tho' till he had tried the Affections of the People, they thought he would not take upon him that Character. However, many believed

believed him to be *the Messiah*, and were baptized in his Name, and owned themselves *his Disciples*. And many more, tho' they did not as yet believe, looked upon him as a very extraordinary Person, that wrought great Miracles, and would perhaps, with the Assistance of the People, restore them to their Liberty. Vast Numbers of both Sorts followed him, but upon false Hopes, being all big with Expectations of great Wealth and Honour, Conquest and Revenge, and all manner of Gratifications of Luxury, in his Service. But the strict Duties of the *Moral Law*, which secure Mens Lives, Liberties and Properties, standing in the way of those Ends, they expected the *Messiah* would abrogate that Law, tho' enjoin'd by *Moses* and the Prophets; or at least would dispense with it to his Followers, 'till his Kingdom was thoroughly established. *Jesus* cast an Eye of Pity on their Ignorance, and resolved to take this publick Opportunity to undeceive them. For which End he went up into a Mountain, from whence he

might be the better seen and heard: And calling all the Company of his Disciples about him, he taught them thus in the Audience of the rest of the People; who likewise followed him, and were attentive to his Doctrine.

Ye follow me indeed, said he, but it is upon false Hopes, with Minds full of Expectations of Wealth and Honour, Conquest and Revenge, and all other Gratifications of Luxury; in all which ye will meet with great Disappointments. Alas, ye know not the true Nature of the Messiah's Kingdom, nor the true Spirit of his Disciples, nor what are the happy Dispositions of Mind necessary for his Service. And therefore I will briefly acquaint you with them.

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

3. It is not they who in their Hearts are grasping Riches, Dominion and Honour, that are fit for the *Messiah's Kingdom*; but the happy Persons who shall be admitted into that Kingdom, are such as have their Hearts and Minds disengaged from the World: If they are poor, they are contented; and if rich, they set not their Hearts upon their Riches; nor are backward to use them for do-

ing good; as aiming at no great Matters in this World.

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

4. Nor is it the Men of Luxury and Pleasure that are the fit Subjects of that Kingdom: But, on the contrary, the grave serious Men, who are well prepared to bear the Cross, and most affected with true penitential Sorrow for their Sins. They shall meet with more solid Comforts under the *Messiah*, than all the vain Mirth and Pleasures of this World can afford.

5. *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

5. Nor is it the Men of fierce, haughty, warlike Tempers, that are fit to make Conquests in the *Messiah's* Kingdom: But a contrary Spirit, namely, a Spirit of Meekness and Humility, is absolutely requisite for a Subject of that Kingdom. And this will qualify him better to enjoy with Comfort such a Portion of this World, as the Evangelical State requires, than the most warlike Courage, and fiercest Passions.

6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:*

6. Nor are ye to fancy that by any unjust Right of the Sword, and Conquest, the *Messiah* and his Followers shall invade

ness †: for they shall be filled.

† Or Justice,
δικαιοσύνη.

invade the Estates and Possessions of other Men. Quite contrary, they abhor every thing that is unjust; they will wrong no Man, but are possessed with a great Love of Equity and Honesty. And by their Honesty, the Subjects of that Kingdom shall be supplied with such a Competency, that they may live very happy and contented; more happy a great deal than the great Conquerors of the World.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

7. Nor shall ye need, as in other Conquests, to depopulate and destroy Countries, and to kill and slay all before you. The *Messiah* abhors likewise all Cruelty; and one of the most necessary Qualifications for his Kingdom, is Mercy and Compassion, and a Tenderness to Mankind in Distress. Men of this Temper shall be sure to meet with Mercy both at the Hands of God and Man, when they want it.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

8. Nor are ye to have such gross carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, as to expect, as in other Conquests, that every Thing should give Way to your Lust. So far from it, that his Subjects shall not

only refrain from the gross Acts of Uncleanness, but study a great inward Purity; and thereby shall make great Progress in the Knowledge and Love of God; and so come to be well acquainted with him, and happy beyond all others in the Enjoyment of him.

9. *Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.*

9. Neither are ye to fancy that the *Messiah* wants an Army of fierce fighting Men, like the Princes of this World, to serve him in his Kingdom. Instead of kindling War, he is for making Peace; and instead of Soldiers that will fight, he is for such Subjects as are most peaceable themselves, and most industrious to make Peace among others. These are the Persons that most resemble God; and in the great Day of Accounts will be honour'd and own'd by him as his genuine Children.

10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.*

10. Finally; I must acquaint you that it is not any worldly Conquests the *Messiah* or his Followers shall make; their Religion is a Religion of the Cross; they shall meet with great and violent Persecutions from the World, for doing their Duty; and these Persecutions shall have excellent Effects upon

on their Minds, in weaning them from the World, and in teaching them Patience, Resignation and Submission to the Divine Will; and this will fit them both to become great Examples of Holiness here, and will prepare them for the heavenly Felicity hereafter. It is by Confessors and Martyrs, not by Soldiers and Conquerors, that the *Messiah's* Kingdom shall be propagated.

11. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*

11. And therefore instead of the sanguine Hopes ye have of great Things in this World, which ye think to attain in my Service, prepare your selves for all sorts of ill Usage, both of Calumnies and Persecutions, on my Account; and if ye bear it with Constancy and Patience, ye shall find it a very happy State.

12. *Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

12. Take Courage therefore and resolve with all Chearfulness and Alacrity to endure this State of Persecution for the Gospel. I tell you for your Encouragement, there is an high Degree of Glory in Heaven prepared for you, if ye hold out stedfastly to the End. Be no way dismayed at this Usage from the World; it is no strange

Thing; so persecuted they the Prophets for doing Good. And as ye shall have the Honour to imitate them in their Sufferings, ye shall also partake with them in their high Reward.

13. ¶ *Ye are the Salt of the Earth: but if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under foot of men.*

13. ¶ I think it so much the more necessary to guard you, my *Disciples*, against this corrupt worldly Spirit, and to infuse into you better Principles; because I design not only to make you good Men and Women your selves: But, by Means of your good Lives and sound Doctrine, to preserve and rescue the rest of Mankind from their corrupt Principles, and vicious Practices. And therefore ye must remarkably distinguish your selves from the rest of the World. *Ye are the Salt*, who are to preserve others from Corruption. It is absolutely necessary that ye be Men of sound Principles, and exemplary Lives your selves. For if notwithstanding the good Principles I shall teach you, they should have no Effect upon you, but ye should be as much carried away with the worldly and carnal Spirit, as other Men are, there is no further Means left to recover you from that Corruption, or to restore

store you to a sound Temper of Heart and Life. There is no new Dispensation whereby to reclaim those who continue wicked, notwithstanding the Doctrine of the Gospel. And therefore corrupt Christians being a Contradiction to their Profession and Institution; like Salt without any Taste or Savouriness in it self, when it is to give a good Relish to other Things; like such unsavoury Salt, they shall be of all Men the most contemned and despised.

14. *Ye are the light of the world. A City that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.*

14. *Ye are the Light of the World*; as the Sun dispels Darkness, the Light of your good Example is to enlighten the ignorant and vicious World; therefore do not indulge yourselves, no not in secret Wickedness; for the Eyes of all will be upon you; and ye may as well think a City seated high on the Top of an Hill will not be seen, as that your Life and Actions will not be publicly exposed and observed.

15. *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel: but on a candlestick, and it giveth*

15. And so I design they should; for Men do not light a Candle to hide it in an obscure Place, where no Body will be the better for the Light of it; but they place it in some very

*eth light to all
that are in the
house.*

very conspicuous Station, from whence it may most advantageously spread its Light to all Comers and Goers. So by gathering Disciples, and setting up a Church, my Design is, that in their good Lives, the World may have a clear Pattern, what sort of Persons they themselves ought to be; and what an excellent Reformation my Doctrine, if thoroughly believed and practised, will introduce.

16. *Let your
light so shine be-
fore men, that
they may see your
good works, and
glorify your Fa-
ther which is in
heaven.*

16. Take care therefore to give the World so bright Examples of Holiness and Virtue, that they may observe a great Reformation in your Lives, to the Honour of God, who has called you first to the Knowledge of the Truth, and has chosen by your Means to communicate it to others.

17. ¶ *Think
not that I am
come to destroy
the Law or the
Prophets: I am
not come to de-
stroy, but to †
fulfil.*

17. ¶ I know this is very unexpected Doctrine to most of you, that instead of military Discipline, I should insist so much on your exemplary Holiness and Virtue. Ye were in Hopes that I would rather ease you of the Burden of the strict Duties of the Moral Law, enjoined by *Moses* and the Prophets; that ye may, without Controul, carry on the Business of the Conquests

† Perfect them.

πληρῶσαι.

Conquests and worldly Kingdom ye are so fond of. Ye expected that I would dispense with the Fifth Commandment, that ye may shake off Obedience to your Superiors; and with the Sixth Commandment, that ye may freely cut off all the *Messiah's* Enemies, or whosoever shall obstruct the setting up of his Kingdom; and with the Seventh Commandment, that as other earthly Conquerors, ye may gratify your Lusts with all the beautiful Captives ye can lay your Hands on; and with the Eighth and Tenth Commandments, that without any other Right than that of Conquest, ye may invade the Wealth and Possessions of other Men; and so get great Estates to your selves. But these are all gross Mistakes, flowing from the wrong Notions of the *Messiah's* worldly Kingdom; which by all Means I must utterly root out of your Minds. Think not therefore that I will dispense with any of the Duties enjoined in the Moral Law, and explained and preached up by the Prophets. I am so far from abrogating those Laws, that I am resolved to teach them to a
greater

greater Degree of Perfection, than either ye, or your chief Doctors the Scribes and Pharisees, or indeed the World, has hitherto understood.

18. *For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law † till all be fulfilled.*

18. For take my Word for it, that I will never abrogate any Part of the moral Law; but that it shall remain in full Force to the End of the World.

19. *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

19. And therefore if any Person professing himself a Subject of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, shall by his Life and Doctrine destroy any one of the Precepts of the Moral Law, and by that Means let in loose and immoral Principles and Practices into the Church, this shall be accounted so great a Crime, that in the great Day of Judgment, such a Person shall be reckoned one of the very worst of all the Professors of Christianity; and as such, shall be most exemplarily punished. And on the other hand, whosoever shall carefully, both by his Life and Doctrine, promote holy Life and good Morals, he shall in the great Day be adjudged to be a most

† Till all things are at an End, *εως ου παντα γινωσκειται.*

most excellent Christian, as having employed his Time and Talents to the best Advantage.

20. *For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

20. For, let me tell you, I have so great a Regard to the Moral Law, that I will not only take care not to abolish it; but will require a much higher Degree of Obedience to it, than the World is aware of. Particularly it is not an outward Compliance with the Letter of it, which is all that is required by your best Doctors, the Scribes and Pharisees, that shall entitle any one to be a good Christian. I expect of you a great Progress in inward Purity and Holiness, beyond what is required by these Doctors of their Disciples, if ever ye intend to be genuine Members of the Christian Church here, or to be admitted to Heaven hereafter.

21. ¶ *Ye have heard that it was said † by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be || in danger of the judgment.*

21. ¶ To give you some Instances of this Truth; that I require higher Degrees of Holiness and Virtue in my Disciples, than the Scribes and Pharisees require in theirs: Ye have heard from those Doctors, that Moses gave you a Precept in the Sixth Commandment, only against the unjust taking away of Men's Lives, in these Words,

† To them.

|| Liable to,

ἐπιπορευς εἰς αἰ τῆ κρίτης.

Words, *Thou shalt not kill*. And for a Sanction of this Precept, they have told you, that whosoever transgresses it shall be liable to a Trial before a Criminal Court, called the *Judgment* or *Affizes*, erected in every City; the Punishment of which is Death by the Sword; so that ye have been taught to look upon this Law against Murder, only as a political Law, the Transgression of which, when legally prov'd, incurs a temporary Death.

22. *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother † without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

† This Word [*εἰκὴν*, without a Cause] is not in the best Copies.

22. But I must give you a much better Information both of the Sins against this Commandment, and of the Punishments of them before an higher Tribunal in the other World. Know then that this Commandment reaches not only the taking away of your Neighbour's Life, but all Degrees of Hatred of him; whether this Hatred be only inward Malice in the Heart, or break out outwardly in Words and Actions, tho' short of taking away his Life. If it is but inward Malice in the Heart, that is a Capital Crime in the Sight of God, and it shall be punished in the other World with a Punish-

Punishment proportionable to the Capital Punishment by the Sword here; but if this Hatred breaks out either in contemptuous slighting Expressions against your Neighbour, or in more grievous Provocations of Slander, Contumely, and Reproach, all these shall in the Future State meet with still higher Degrees of Punishment; as you know Stoning and Burning alive in the Valley of *Hinnom*, are more severe Deaths than Beheading with the Sword.

23. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee;*

24. *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

23, and 24. Think not that the Offering of Sacrifice ſhall atone for this inward Malice, or theſe outward Provocations. And therefore, if ye expect that your Sacrifices ſhould be acceptable, let a Reconciliation with your offended Neighbour make way for them; that the Duties of Charity and Devotion may not be ſeparated, but may go hand in hand together.

25. *Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*

26. *Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

25, and 26. And if ye have wronged any body, see that ye make no Delay to make Reparation, and to reconcile your Differences, while ye are as yet in speaking and conversing Terms with your Adversary. For, as ye know, in this World neglecting to pay Debts, and to make up Quarrels in time, is attended with very bad Consequences; your Adversary's Mind growing exasperated, he sues you at Law, and puts you to abundance of Trouble and Charge: And if ye are cast at Law, the Judge commits you to the Custody of the Sheriff, or his Officers; and if ye can't pay the Debt, the Sheriff claps you up in Prison; and so the principal Debt, enflamed with Costs and Damages, and the Fees of the Court and Goal, makes your Case infinitely more deplorable than it was at first: so shall it be, and much worse, in the World to come, with relation to God, the eternal Judge, and his Prison of Hell, and his Officers the Devils. If ye do not make Reparation of Injuries, and reconcile your Differences in Time, the injured Person will commit you to
God's

God's righteous Judgment; and God will condemn you; and deliver you over to the Devils, to cast you into Hell Prison. And by that Time your Case will be like that of a miserable ruined Debtor, clapt up for such an immense Sum, that there is no Hope it can ever be satisfied, or that he can ever be ransomed out of that dismal Place.

27. ¶ *Ye have heard that it was said † by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery.*

† To them.

27. ¶ Another Instance wherein the Morals of a good Christian are to excel what is taught by the Scribes and Pharisees, is in their Doctrine concerning the Seventh Commandment; as to which they have taught you, that *Moses* of old forbad only the gross Sins of Uncleanness.

28. *But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

28. But this is a very low and imperfect Interpretation of that Commandment. Remember I tell you that lustful Thoughts, Imaginations, and Desires, are likewise, in the Sight of God, great Transgressions of that Precept.

29. *And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is pro-*

29, and 30. For preventing of which, I exhort you carefully to watch all your Senses, and to avoid all Occasions of this, or any other Sin. If ye
C are

profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

31. It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

32. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adul-

are engaged in any vicious Habit, or in any tempting Company, which is like to ensnare you in the Transgression of this, or any other of God's Commandments, serve them as you would do a gangrened Member: If they are ever so dear, pleasant, or profitable, by all means part with them. It is better to endure the Pain of Self-denial in renouncing any beloved Lust, or in abandoning any beloved but dangerous Company, than to run the Hazard of destroying your selves, Soul and Body, in Hell; which will be the Consequence of indulging any vicious Inclination, or of frequenting bad Company.

31, and 32. And now that I am guarding you against the Sins of Uncleanneſs, and all the Causes and Occasions of them, I must caution you likewise against another Practice of great Affinity with them; I mean the Custom of putting away your Wives by a Bill of Divorce upon every frivolous Occasion. By this Practice, Men indulge their sinful Appetites in the frequent Change of their Wives, as if they were so many Concubines. For they have been taught

*adultery : and
whoſoever ſhall
marry her that
is divorced, com-
mitteth adultery.*

taught by theſe Doctors, that if a Man has a Mind to put away his Wife, he has no more to do but to comply with the Formality of the Law, and take out a publick Writing of Divorce; by which, both Husband and Wife are left to their Liberty of Marrying or not Marrying again, as they think fit. But this is a great Abuse of the ſacred Inſtitution of Marriage, and opens a great Door to wandering Luſt. For preventing of which, remember what I now ſay : If any Man (with, or without a Bill of Divorce) ſhall put away his Wife, except in Caſe of her Infidelity to the Marriage Bed, that Man is acceſſary to all the Lewdneſs ſhe may be guilty of with other Men in that her abandoned State, and to the Sin of Adultery, if ſhe marries another Husband, while the firſt is alive. And whoſoever marries her, engages and lives in a State of Adultery with her.

33. ¶ *Again
ye have heard
that it hath been
ſaid † by them
of old time, Thou*

† To them.

ſhalt

33. ¶ Another Inſtance wherein the Chriſtian Morals are to exceed what is taught by the Scribes and Pharifees, is in the Matter of Oaths, in which they come far ſhort of the true

C 2

Intent

*shalt not for-
swear thyself, but
shalt perform un-
to the Lord thine
Oaths.*

34. *But I say
unto you, Swear
not at all; nei-
ther by heaven,
for it is God's
throne:*

35. *Nor by the
earth, for it is
his footstool: nei-
ther by Jerusa-
lem, for it is the
City of the great
King.*

36. *Neither
shalt thou swear
by thy head, be-
cause thou canst
not make one hair
white or black.*

Intent of the Third Command-
ment; for they interpret that
Commandment to be only a
Prohibition of Perjury.

34, 35, and 36. But to re-
ctify this Abuse, I require you
to abstain not only from all false,
but likewise from all vain, rash
Oaths, if ever so true. Parti-
cularly I prohibit all customary
Swearing in your common Dis-
course and Conversation. And
do not think to be excused if ye
invent or use Oaths that are not
directly by the Name of God
himself, but (to lessen the Re-
verence of an Oath) by other
Words, whether of an equiva-
lent Signification or not. For
if these Oaths have any Signi-
fication of God, tho' they do
not directly name him, this is
all one and the same, as if ye
swore by God himself. Of this
sort is your Swearing *by Hea-
ven*, which is God's Throne;
and your Swearing *by the Earth*,
which is his Footstool; and your
Swearing *by Jerusalem*, which
is the Place of his Royal Pre-
sence upon Earth. But if the
Things ye swear by, have no
Signification of God, then it is
Nonsense and Impiety to swear
by

by them, having no Knowledge to discern the Truth or Falseness of what ye swear, or Power to avenge it, if ye swear falsely. And of this Nature is that common senseless Oath, the Swearing *by your Head*, which is an assuming of Divine Honour to your selves, poor impotent Creatures, that cannot make one Hair white or black. Learn therefore to abstain from these, and all other Oaths, which are so usual in your common Discourse and Conversation; for they mightily lessen the Reverence of an Oath, and bring in a Trickiness and Dishonesty into Mens Words and Actions.

37. *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

37. But instead of these, or any other Oaths, let your Speech and Conversation be reduced to a Plainness and Simplicity, that Men may depend on your Word without an Oath; for all these Aggravations of Speech, that are more than modest Significations of the true Sense of the Mind, proceed from some sinister Design, and are Temptations to Lying or Perjury; and are usually designed for compassing some sinful End or Purpose.

38. ¶ *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An Eye for an Eye; and a Tooth for a Tooth.*

39. *But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

40. *And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.*

41. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,*

38. ¶ Another Instance wherein your Moral Righteousness must exceed that which is taught by the Scribes and Pharisees, is in the Point of Retaliation of Injuries; concerning which ye have been taught by these Doctors, that ye may revenge and retaliate Injuries, provided your Revenge keeps within the due Bounds of inflicting the Loss of an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth; and so proportionably in other Things, Limb for Limb, and Life for Life.

39, 40, and 41. But if ye intend to be my Disciples, ye must abstain from every Thing that looks like a vindictive Temper. Let the Reparation of Injuries be sought in a peaceable Manner of the publick Magistrate, if your offending Neighbour will not agree to make it of himself. But I would not have you forward even in this; to call your Neighbour before the Magistrate, for every small Affront or Injury. In lesser Matters, rather venture the receiving a second Injury, than sue for the Reparation of the first. Try that Way of gaining an Adversary,

*mile, go with him
twain.*

42. *Give to
him † that ask-
eth thee, and *
from him that
would borrow of
thee, turn not
thou away.*

† If he.

* If he would bor-
row, &c.

versary, not by retaliating, but
by forgiving an Injury.

42. But do not even rest
there. If ye would entirely gain
your Adversary, pursue him with
further Acts of Kindness and
Beneficence, *e. g.* If he falls
into Decay, and desires your
Charity and Bounty, be sure to
let him have it. Or if he is
above that, but wants to bor-
row of you, or to be assisted in
any sort of good Offices, shew
no Resentment or Aversion to
him; but serve him readily and
cheerfully in every thing where-
in he wants your Assistance.
This is a much more noble Vi-
ctory, to gain him over to be
your Friend, than to overcome
him as an Enemy.

43. ¶ *Ye have
heard that it
hath been said,
Thou shalt love
thy Neighbour,
and hate thine
Enemy.*

43. ¶ And as ye are not to
retaliate Injuries, so if ye intend
to be my Disciples, ye must not
mind that common Maxim,
tho' taught by those Doctors;
*Thou shalt love thy Neighbour,
and hate thine Enemy.* For ye
must by no Means cherish any
Hatred against your Enemies.

44. *But I say
unto you, Love
your Enemies,
bless them that
curse you, do good
to*

44. But love them so far at
least as to do all common neigh-
bourly Duties to them; and
likewise to observe, esteem, and
love their good Qualities; and

to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

45. *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

46. *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same?*

47. *And if ye salute*

on account thereof to speak well of them, and to them; and to take all Opportunities to do them Good; and heartily to recommend them to God in Prayer, tho' they treat you ever so ill in Word and Deed.

45. In so doing, ye shall resemble your heavenly Father, God Almighty, who does Good to all, and shews many common Favours to Friends and Foes, good and bad; tho' he reserves his more particular Favours for good Men, for whom he has a particular Friendship. So ye, tho' ye are to reserve your particular Friendship and brotherly Love for good Men and Women, and to chuse your Friends among them only; yet as to the Duties of Justice, Charity, and Humanity, Prayers, and common neighbourly Love, ye are to pay them to all Men, even to your worst Enemies.

46, and 47. By this ye shall nobly distinguish your selves from the rest of the World, who generally content themselves to express their Charity and Kindness, and to shew their Civilities to those of their own Sect and Party only. A very low Degree of

salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? do not even the Publicans so?

48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

of Goodness, which the very Publicans come up to.

48. But as ye have the Opportunity to be much better instructed, and to be furnished with more divine Principles, instead of following such mean Patterns, who confine their Charity and Beneficence to their own Friends and Party; take Care that in this of Charity, and all the other Parts of Kindness to your Neighbour, ye propose to your selves the Pattern of Almighty God, in a more universal Beneficence; and that ye come as near it, as your imperfect State and Circumstances in this World will admit.

C H A P. VI.

Ver. 1. *Take heed that ye do not your † Alms before men to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

† Righteousness,
δικαιοσύνη.

VERSE 1. But it is not only in their Misinterpretations of the Law, that the Morals ye have learnt of the Scribes and Pharisees are to be rectified; there are many other Things, for which they pretend no Countenance from the Law, in which your Righteousness must exceed theirs.

Particularly they are apt to mar all good Duties with Hypocrisy, by intermixing their low carnal Ends and Designs with them, such as Vanity and Ostentation, and the Affectation of Praise and Applause from Men, or Profit and Advantage to themselves. Instead of which, ye my Disciples are to do all your good Actions with a single Eye to God, and not from any inferior mean Design of Praise or Profit from the World. Otherwise, assure your selves, your Reward for such good Actions as are not done with an Eye to God, but from worldly Views and Designs, shall be all in this World; ye may perhaps meet with the Praise or Profit ye aimed

ed at; but have no further to expect from them in Heaven. For God will not bestow those great heavenly Rewards on any Thing but what is done purely out of Respect to his Precepts, and designed for his Service. More particularly ye are to mind this Rule in the most commended Duties of private *Alms-giving, Prayer, and Fast-ing*; in all which the Scribes and Pharisees are too much led away with the Pursuit of Vain-glory, and breed their Disciples to the Imitation of the same Spirit.

2. *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.*

3. *But when thou doest alms, let not thy left-hand know what thy*

2. To begin with *Alms-giving*, do not make a Noise with it, by your selves or others trumpeting out your good Deeds; as Hypocrites chuse to make their good Works as publick as they can, on purpose to procure the Praise and Applause of Men, and other worldly Ends consequent thereon. I can assure you, they are to expect no Reward in Heaven for such sort of Alms.

3, and 4. But ye my Disciples, when ye do *Alms*, go about it in the secretest modestest Manner: And your heavenly Father,

thy right hand doth :

4. *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.*

5. ¶ *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

6. *But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

Father, who sees and observes that you have only an Eye to him in it, will reward you openly in the great Day of Judgment.

5. ¶ In Prayer likewise, do not imitate those Hypocrites, who chuse to pray in the most publick Places, and with a Design to be taken Notice of, and admired, or trusted and preferred by the World, as Men of great Piety and Devotion. This, I assure you, is the only Reward they are to expect.

6. Instead of this Vain-glory and Ostentation, do ye contrive to perform your secret Devotions as quietly as possibly ye can, retired from Company and Business: And God, who is never excluded from the most secret Place, shall publicly reward you before Men and Angels, in the Judgment of the great Day.

7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

9. After this manner therefore pray ye. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

7. Another Thing in their Prayers, which Hypocrites value themselves upon, is the great Length of them, and the seeming Zeal of their frequent Repetitions; a Custom the Heathen likewise follow, as believing their gods are to be prevailed upon by Clamour and Noise.

8. But do not ye imitate them in this; for it is neither to inform nor to persuade God, that Prayers are designed; for he knows all your Wants before ye ask him. And therefore your Prayers should be contrived in a Way most suitable to his Honour, and your Good.

9. And that ye may know the better in what Manner this Duty of Prayer is to be performed; let it be in some general, short, submissive and important Petitions, like these following. “ O Father of Angels
“ and Men, who art both able
“ and ready to help and relieve
“ thy poor Creatures, the first
“ Thing we desire of thee is,
“ that all Things may be contrived for thy Honour and
“ Glory; and that we and all
“ thy Servants may be directed
“ to the best Methods for promoting

“moting it; and that all our
 “other Petitions may be regulated and limited by it.”

10. *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*

10. Next we pray that the Gospel may be propagated all the World over; and that the good Effects of it may appear in the Obedience and holy Lives of the Professors of it, which we desire may be daily improving to higher Degrees of Perfection; that it may come as near as is possible for human Infirmary, to the ready, chearful Obedience of the Angels in Heaven.

11. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

11. Further we beseech thee in thy good Providence to supply us with such a Competency of worldly Necessaries, as thou knowest will best suit our present Condition and Circumstances.

12. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

12. And forgive us our Sins, as we forgive those who have injured us.

13. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

13. And keep us out of the Way of Temptation to Sin; and when we are under the Power of it, deliver us from the Sin to which we are then tempted, and from all other Snares of the Devil. We are encouraged to put up these Petitions

titions to thy holy Majesty ; for thou art our King, we thy Subjects ; we are weak Creatures, but thou art Omnipotent ; and all these Petitions, as they make for our Benefit, so they aim at thy Honour and Glory, in which we desire all our Prayers may terminate for ever and ever. So be it.

14. *For if ye forgive their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

14. It is not in vain that to the Petition for Pardon of Sin, I teach you to add this Limitation, *As ye forgive them that injure you* ; for this is a settled Rule that God has set, and most necessary for you to remember, even in your Prayers and Devotions, that if ye are of a merciful forgiving Temper, God will forgive you.

15. *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

15. But if ye are hard-hearted and revengeful, ye are by no Means to expect Mercy and Forgiveness at his Hands.

16. ¶ *Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may*

16. ¶ And now the same Caution I have given you against Ostentation and Vain-glory, in the Duties of *Almsgiving* and *Prayer*, ye are to observe likewise in the Duty of *Fasting*. Do not put on a demure sad Look, as the Hypocrite

may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

17. *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face.*

18. *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

19. ¶ *Lay not up for your selves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.*

crites do, when they fast, that they may be taken Notice of by Men, and receive the Applause of mortified Persons. This is what they aim at; and it is all the Reward they shall have.

17. But ye, my Disciples, when ye fast, appear in your usual, cleanly, and gay Garb and Drefs.

18. Like Men who aim not at the setting off their Devotion and Mortification to the World, but are content with the Eye and Approbation of Almighty God; who will openly reward in the Day of Judgment, the good Things which he beholds thus sincerely done in secret.

19. ¶ Another Part of the Pharisaical Spirit I must caution you against, is that of their Covetousness and Anxiety as to the World. Strive not so much to lay up Treasures of earthly Things; to have Wardrobes full of rich Clothes and Furniture; Granaries well replenished with all sorts of Grain; and Chests and Cabinets well stored with Money and Jewels; all which are subject to divers Accidents

cidents of Moths, Weavels, and Thieves.

20. *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.*

21. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

22. *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

23. *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.*

20. But endeavour, by employing your Wealth in good and charitable Works, to transmit your Effects to Heaven; and so to lay up your Treasures there, where they will remain safe and secure to your Use, against all Dangers and Casualties whatsoever.

21. This will be a certain Means to cure you of worldly-mindedness, and to set your Affections on Heaven: For where-ever your chief Treasure is, your Affections will be there also.

22, and 23. And this is no small Advantage; for worldly-mindedness (as indeed all other strong vicious Inclinations) casts such a Mist before the internal Light of the Mind and Conscience, that it can't discern Truth from Falshood, or Right from Wrong; and this exposes a Man to innumerable wrong Steps in his Life and Conversation; as a dark Eye blinded with Rheum exposes a Man, who trusts to it without a better Guide, to many Dangers in his walking, especially in deep and rough Ways, where he must chuse

chuse his Steps; whereas a Mind set on Heaven is a good Director in all your Actions, like a good Eye, which gives a clear Direction to the Body in all its Motions.

24. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

24. Besides, this worldly-mindedness is utterly inconsistent with Religion and the Fear of God. For God and the World are like two Masters of contrary Tempers and Dispositions, whose Commands do generally interfere. No Man can serve them both; for either he will inwardly love and outwardly obey the first, and hate and disobey the second; or else he will love and obey the second, and hate and disregard the first.

25. *Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat,*

25. The Service of the World then being so dangerous, beware that under Pretence of a lawful Care about the Necessaries of Life, Meat, Drink, and Clothing, ye do not run into an excessive Anxiety and Solitude about these Things. Learn to trust Providence; for certainly God who gave you your Lives, and made your Bodies subject to so many Necessities, and forbids your own anxious Care about these very Necessities, (much more

† Be not anxious,
μή μεριμνήτε.

and the body than raiment?

more about the Superfluities of Life) will take Care to supply you with those Necessaries upon your regular moderate Care, and without any excessive Anxiety and Solitude.

26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

26. To encourage you to this Duty, behold those merry Creatures the Birds and Fowls of the Air, who can't do near so much toward their own Subsistence as ye can; for they can neither sow nor reap, nor lay up in Granaries; all which ye can and may do; yet they are taken Care of, and fed by God's Providence. Have not ye much the better of them? And do not ye believe that God counts you more deserving of his Care?

27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his † stature?*

27. And indeed what signifies all this excessive Care, but to shorten your Days, and to make your Lives uneasy; for ye can neither prolong Life, nor the healthy vigorous Part of it, by all your Anxiety; but may easily prejudice both.

† Age or Youth,
ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν.

28. *And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lillies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither*

28. Neither need ye be more anxious for Clothes than for Victuals; the same Providence extending to both. For consider the wild Lillies and Tulips, how prettily they grow, without any of their own Care and Anxiety.

neither do they spin.

They neither undergo the Field Labour nor the House Labour, which ye are capable of, towards providing your own Clothing.

29. *And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

29. And yet are clothed much finer than the greatest Princes, with all the Encouragements they can give to the skilfullest Artists.

30. *Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the † oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

† Or Still, *κλι-
ραυον.*

30. And if God's Providence extends it self to such short-liv'd worthless Creatures as the Herbs and Flowers, which look gay to Day, and to Morrow are cast into the Still; shall he not much more clothe you by Means of your own moderate regular Care and Industry, the Use of which ye are allowed; and without an excessive distrustful Anxiety, which he has forbid you.

31. *Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

31. To conclude then this Argument against worldly-mindedness and Anxiety, lay aside all these distrustful Thoughts about Meat, Drink, and Clothing.

32. *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek)*

32. Such excessive Care about these Things is more excusable in Heathens, who are Strangers
to

seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

to God's Providence. Your heavenly Father will not forget you; he knows ye have Need of all these Things, and will provide them for you, upon your moderate and regular Care, which he allows; and without your anxious excessive Care, which he has prohibited.

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

33. But let your great and chief Care be to get to Heaven, by having a deep Sense of Religion, and by promoting the Practice of it in your selves and others; a Study which will turn to the best Account; for ye shall thereby both secure your eternal Happiness; and all worldly Things, as far as they are necessary or good for you, shall be thrown in to the Bargain.

34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

34. And as ye are not to extend your Care to the Superfluities, but to limit it (and without Anxiety too) to the Necessaries of Life; so neither are ye to stretch your Care about these Necessaries to any long Time to come: for the future, when it comes, will be more proper to provide for its own Occasions, and Circumstances. And the Troubles and Care of your present Circumstances, are sufficient for the present Time.

So that ye neither need nor ought to anticipate the Cares of the future.

C H A P. VII.

Ver. 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

2. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

VERSE 1. There is one Branch more of the Pharisaical Spirit, against which it is necessary that ye be cautioned; namely, Cenforiousness and rash judging; a Sin which is commonly punished in the same kind upon the rash Censurer, both in this World, and in that which is to come.

2. For it is so justly contrived by God, that according to the Degrees of Charitableness or Cenforiousness, with which ye treat your Neighbour; so God will treat you mercifully or severely, both in the Dispensations of his Providence in this World, and in his final Retributions in the World to come. And the World likewise never fails to be revenged of the unjust Censurer in his own Way, by detecting the Falshood of his Calumnies, and retaliating upon him, by exposing his other Vices.

3. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

4. *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

5. *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,*

3. Consider likewise how highly indecent and improper it is, for a Man who over-looks his own great Vices, to be so sharp-sighted and censorious as to his Neighbour's smaller Faults.

4. And how unqualified such a Person is for the Office of Censuring, who can neither see his own Faults, nor decently blame them in others, while he is guilty of the same, or greater himself.

5. There must certainly be a great deal of Pride and Hypocrisy lurking under this Temper; for by offering to censure your Neighbour's small Faults, ye would make the World believe that ye are Persons of very blameless Lives your selves. Beware of this Hypocrisy, and let your Censoriousness begin at Home; first censure and amend your own Faults; and then ye will be much better qualified to discharge the Duty of fraternal Correction to others.

6. Only in the Discharge of this Duty, ye must take Care not to obtrude your Admonitions and Reprehensions upon Persons of fierce, implacable

swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.

Tempers, who, instead of being the better for them, will avenge themselves upon you, and do you all the Mischief lies in their Power; nor upon Persons of incorrigible, profligate, loose Lives; for they will only profanely and atheistically ridicule your good Admonitions, and expose you for administering them.

I shall conclude this Discourse of Christian Duties with Two general Precepts; but so comprehensive ones, that they will serve for a compleat Abridgment of the whole Moral Law, and likewise very much facilitate the Observation of it.

7. ¶ *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

8. *For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

9. *Or what man is there of you,*

7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. ¶ The First relates to your Duty to God, whom with Love and Complacence ye are to look upon as a kind and loving, not as a hard-hearted, morose Father, able and ready to help you to all good Things ye apply to him for; and therefore let me exhort you earnestly to be very diligent, assiduous, and importunate in all the Duties of Devotion, more especially in begging the Grace and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, to enable you to do your Duty. And for your

you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?

10. *Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent?*

11. *If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

your Encouragement, I do assure you, that God will never deny the importunate Suitor the good Things he wants, and which he knows to be needful for him. Even an earthly Father, tho' otherwise ever so ill-natur'd, can't have the Heart to deny his own Children Necessaries; or instead of good Things, to give them what he knows will hurt them. Far less will God despise or elude the Prayers of his Children. For tho' he would have you, like dutiful Children, address him for what ye want, he is more ready to grant you good Things, than ye are to ask them; and there is nothing he is better pleas'd with, than to have you depend upon him, as loving Children on a kind Father, and to come frequently to him with your Petitions and Thanksgivings. This is an Employment which will turn to the best Account, in helping you to a right Sense of your Duty; in furnishing you with Grace to observe it; and in procuring you Pardon after Transgression, upon the penitent Confession of your Sins, and sincere Resolutions and Endeavours of Amendment.

12. Now

12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you; do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

12. Now this Love of God to you all as his Children, should induce you not only to love him again, (to be expressed in your frequent Addresses to him) but also to love one another like Brethren. And this Love will facilitate all the Duties you owe to your Neighbour: Which leads me to the *Second General Precept*, with which I conclude this Compendium of Moral Duties; namely, that in all Points of Duty ye are to treat your Neighbour after the same Manner as ye would think reasonable to be treated by him, if ye were in his Circumstances, and he in yours. This Love of your Neighbour, flowing thus from the Love of God, and closely connected with it, is so comprehensive a Duty, that it answers all the particular Precepts of the Moral Law, with all the Explications and Enlargements of the Prophets.

I have now taught you a very compleat Rule of Duty; but I foresee ye will be under great Temptations to neglect and abandon it: and therefore before I dismiss you, I will lay before you some of the chief snares ye will be endangered by, which will be apt

to seduce you from this strict Way of Duty I have been teaching you; and will endeavour likewise to fortify you against them. There are chiefly three Sorts of Snares, that will be apt to seduce you from your Duty.

13. ¶ *Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.*

14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

13, and 14. ¶ I. The First is, that the Way of Duty, as I have described it, is really difficult, and but very little frequented by the Generality of Mankind; on the other Hand, the Way of Vice is easy and enticing; both your own corrupt Inclinations, and the Current of evil Examples, will be apt to hurry you into it, except ye are fore-armed with a great deal of Caution and Resolution. Herein then ye are to employ your greatest Vigilance, and to exert your utmost Endeavours, to keep in the strict Way of Duty, which I have taught you; tho' both your own carnal Inclinations, and the Multitude of evil Examples, and the Authority and Prevalency of Custom, and the Fashions of the World, should tempt you to desert it. Consider seriously with yourselves, that how great soever the Temptations to a sinful Course may be at present, it will certainly

certainly end in your everlasting Ruin; and, on the other Hand, that the strict Way of Duty, however difficult, unpleasant, and unfrequented it may be at present, will infallibly lead you to eternal Happiness, which will richly answer your greatest Pains and Endeavours.

15. ¶ *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

17. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth*

15. ¶ II. A Second dangerous Temptation, by which ye will be apt to be ensnared, is bad Doctrine, especially such as undermines Christian Practice; against which ye must be very much upon your Guard. For many deluded, but perhaps zealous and in other Things pious Teachers, will start up, whose dangerous Doctrine, if ye suck it in, before ye are aware of it, will overthrow both your good Principles and Practices.

16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Ye are to be very cautious of that Sort of Teachers, who are fitted out by the Devil not to seduce you by their loose Examples, like those I just now described, but under a great Shew of Piety. The best Way to know them, is not so much to mind their great Appearances of Piety and Devotion, which all
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bringeth forth evil fruit.

18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

19. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewen down and cast into the fire.*

20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

Hereticks generally put on ; as the Fruits and Consequences they and their Doctrine are apt to produce in the World. If the Doctrine they teach undermines any of the great Duties of Morality, either directly, or in its Consequences, then ye may be sure that it is a false Doctrine. But if the natural Tendency of it is to promote Holiness and good Life, ye may be sure it is a good Doctrine. And as this is a sure Mark, it is likewise well fitted to the meanest Capacities. For it is not every one that can answer the Objections against good, or the Arguments for bad Doctrines ; but it is no hard Matter in Time, even for an unlearned Man to observe the good or bad Effects which any Doctrine has in the World. As Fruit - Trees and Vines are not so easily discerned whether they be good or bad from the Sight of the Bark and Leaves, as from the Goodness or Badness of their Fruit. This is the chief Mark by which ye are to judge of all Doctrines: If they have a plain Tendency to make Men sincerely good, by putting them upon the Practice of those Duties I have been

been recommending, they are good Doctrines. But if they have a Tendency, either directly to Impiety or Immorality, or indirectly, by taking away any of the chief Motives, Helps, and Means of Duty, then they are bad and dangerous Doctrines; and ye are to be upon your Guard against them, as pernicious, soul-destroying Errors.

21. ¶ *Note every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

23. *And then will I profess un-*

to

21, 22, and 23. ¶ III. A Third dangerous Temptation, whereby a great many will be seduced out of the Way of Duty, into the Way of Sin and Vice, will be by placing their Hopes of Salvation on other shining Qualities, that how much soever esteemed and admired by the World, will signify nothing if separated from true Holiness and Virtue: Such as a zealous high Profession, great Gifts and Talents of Learning and Elocution, High Places and Preferments in the Church, and a venerable Name and Esteem among Men; all which will prove broken Reeds, if separated from Holiness and good Life. For after all, it is not the most confident Faith, nor the greatest Profession, nor the

to them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.

the being Masters of the greatest Learning, Knowledge, and Eloquence, nor the being entrusted with many Gifts and Talents, nor the being ever so zealous against Heresies and Hereticks, nor the obtaining a mighty Name in the Church, nor the being employed in the highest Trusts and Offices of it, nor any other ever so much admired and shining Qualities, without a sincere Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel, that shall be accepted in the great Day of Accounts. All these indeed will be trusted to, and pleaded; but without such sincere Obedience, they shall every one of them be rejected; and the Persons that plead them shall have no Share or Interest in me, nor Protection from me; but shall be appointed their Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers.

24. ¶ *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

25.

24, and 25. ¶ To conclude then, all depends upon your learning, and sincerely putting in Practice these Principles and Duties of Religion and good Life, which I have taught you; for if ye live up to these Precepts, ye shall acquire such a Firmness of Mind, and be so

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well

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

26. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

27. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

28. *And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished*

well settled in your Principles, that no Temptations, Trials, or Persecutions whatsoever, shall be able to seduce you to Apostacy in your Profession, or to a Relapse into a sinful Course of Life. Your Religion will be like a strong House built on a solid Foundation, which no Storms or Inundations can hurt.

26, and 27. But on the other Hand, if ye rest upon a bare Knowledge and Profession of my Doctrine, and rely on the Soundness of your Opinions, without an hearty, resolute, applying of your selves to the Study and Obedience of my Precepts, ye will lose all your Labour, like a Man that builds a sightly House upon a bad Foundation: And in the Day of Trial and Temptation ye will be overcome, and be in Danger of falling away into a total and final Course of Sin and Apostacy.

28, and 29. When this divine Sermon was ended, the People, who had very attentively heard it, were strangely struck and wrought upon, both

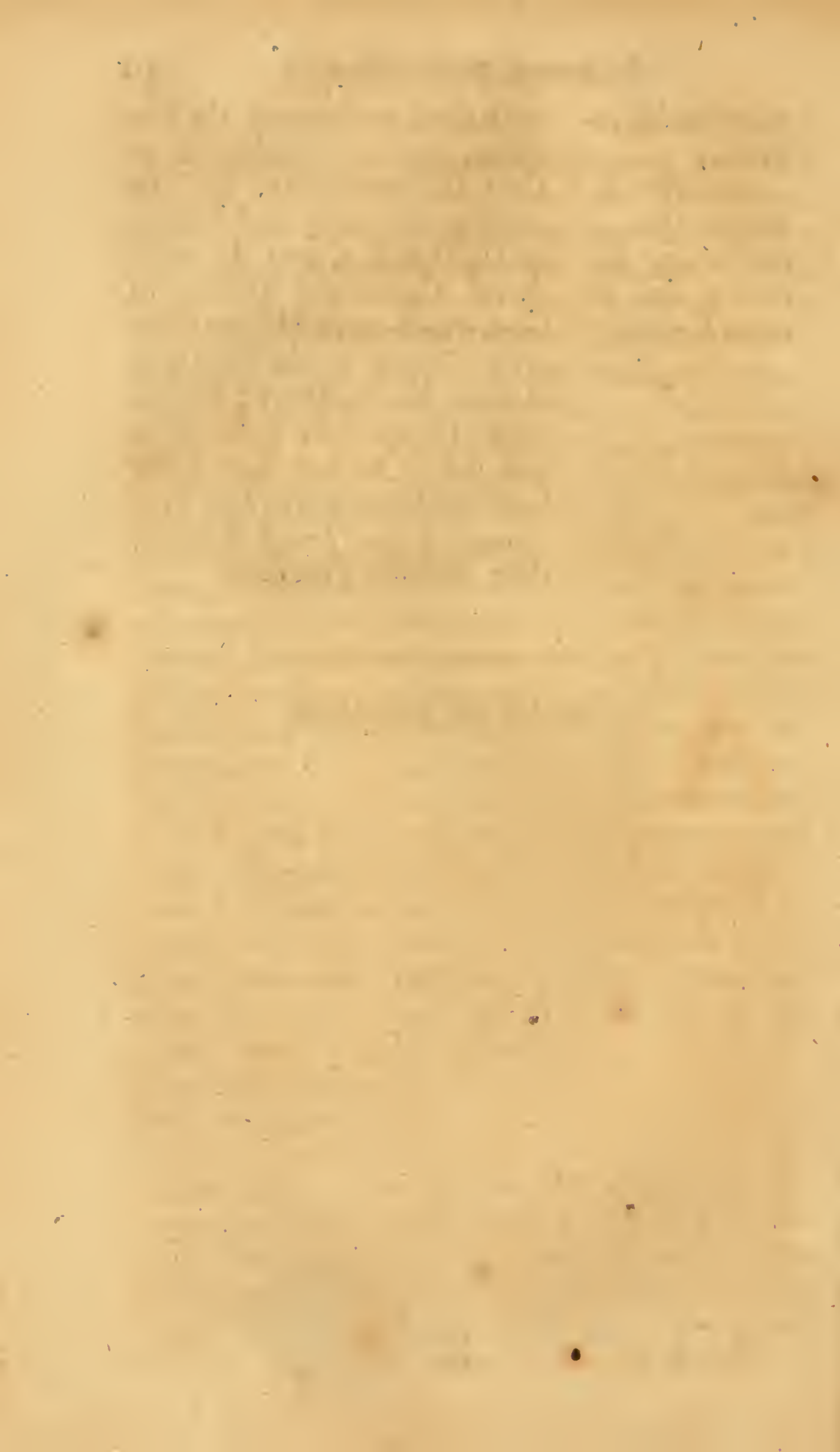
with

nished at his doctrine.

29. *For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*

with the Excellency of the Doctrine, and its Suitableness to their Circumstances, and the mighty Authority and Energy of the Speaker, and the wonderful Grace and Blessing of God, which carried Home these great Truths to the Hearts of most of the Auditory: For all these Things were quite new, and not to be met with in the superficial Comments and Traditions of the *Jewish* Rabbies, their ordinary Teachers.

The End of the Paraphrase.



S E R M O N I.

M A T. V. I.

And † seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him.

Ver. 2. And he opened his Mouth, and taught them, saying.

The First Sermon on this Text.

AS I would not, with some Writers on this Divine Sermon, pass by these Words as superfluous; so I could not prevail with my self to entertain you with several Observations, which I am apt to think, chiefly for want of better Matter, some other Commentators have made, and insisted on from them; one of which is, that as the Law of *Moses* was given on a Mountain, so Christ that he might resemble *Moses*, thought fit to deliver his Gospel from the Mount; as if our Lord had confined his Preaching to this Mountain, and had not at other Times taught Gospel Duties in other Places; namely, in their Cities, Villages, Synagogues, the Temple, on the Plain, out of *Peter's* Ship, and in short every where, as Opportunity presented. And indeed his going up into the

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Mountain

† Or looking upon. See *Mark* viii. 33.

Mountain here, seems from the Text it self to have been occasioned by the Multitudes, for the Conveniency of Ease from the Crowd, and that he might be the better heard and understood by this great Company of Auditors; it being natural upon such Occasions for any Man who is to speak to a Multitude, to take the Advantage of an higher Station; that his Voice may be the better heard, and his Person seen, which has no small Influence on the Authority and Freedom of Elocution, so necessary in all Orators, and so particularly noted in our Saviour in the End of this Sermon, (a) *that he taught with Authority, and not as the Scribes*; for I am not for making Mysteries, where the Holy Writers are silent about them. Nor do I apprehend any further Mystery in the Posture of *Sitting*, than that it might be either for his Ease after a Journey; for his travelling through all (b) *Galilee*, and the People's following him from all Parts of the Country, are taken Notice of in the Context; or else that it was in Compliance with the Custom of the *Jewish* Doctors, who usually sat, when they taught in their Schools and Synagogues. Nor do I lay any great Stress on the Phrase of *opening his Mouth*, and teaching, for this was a common Phrase among the *Jews*, for a deliberate breaking of Silence, and offering to make a Speech. Far less would I observe, as I find some do, that our Saviour called his twelve Apostles up to him from the Crowd, and gave them these Lessons and Instructions apart; for this I take to be an Observation of no good Importance, and likewise directly contrary to some Passages in the History it self, which tells

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(a) Mat. vii. 29.

(b) Mat. iv. 23, 24, 25.

us that in this Sermon (c) *he taught the People*; and St. *Luke* thought this so material an Observation, as to the Doctrine of the Sermon, which he likewise gives us an Account of; that he has left it upon Record, that we might not mistake in a Thing of this Consequence; that he finished all these Sayings (d) *in the Audience of the People*.

But instead of these, and some other Observations, which I doubt are either false, or frivolous; at least have no Ground from this Text; I shall chuse to entertain you with two very material Inquiries, which though commonly overlooked by the practical Writers on this Sermon, I judge may be of singular Use, to help us to the true Sense and Meaning of it; and notwithstanding this their Silence, are both very directly pointed at in the Words; nay, seem to me to be the principal Scope and Design of them.

I. The first Inquiry shall be concerning the immediate Occasion of the Sermon from these first Words, *And seeing the Multitudes*.

II. The next shall be concerning the proper Auditors of it, called here our Saviour's *Disciples*; whether by them we are to understand only the twelve Apostles, or all Christians.

I. *First*, then, Let us consider the immediate Occasion of this Sermon, from these first Words, *And seeing the Multitudes*: This naturally leading us to inquire what our Saviour now saw in these Multitudes, to induce him to make such a Discourse to them at this Time. For this *Seeing*, as I take it, was not only a beholding with the

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Eyes

(c) Mat. vii. 29.

(d) Luke vii. 1.

Eyes of the Body, but a perceiving and considering with the Eye of the Mind. And this the *Greek* Lexicographers take Notice of, that the Word ἰδέν, translated *Seeing*, is often used in that Sense (e); and several Instances of it may be found in the *New Testament* (f). We shall the better satisfy our selves in this Inquiry, by looking back a little into the Context, and considering what is there observed of the Circumstances of these Multitudes, at the Time of this Sermon; which in short was, as we are told at the three last Verses of the foregoing Chapter: (g) That our Saviour had now travelled all over *Galilee*, and had made himself remarkable for two Things, which took mightily with the People.

One was the new Doctrine he publicly preached, and made no Secret of it, which was the good News that the *Messiah* was now to enter upon his Kingdom. It is true in our Translation this is a little obscure; for we say only that *Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom*, Mat. iv. 23. But in the Original it is Κηρύσσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς Βασιλείας; which, literally rendered, is, *proclaiming the good News of the Kingdom*. THE Kingdom; for so, by way of Excellency, they called the Kingdom of the *Messiah*. This good News was what they longed for, and at this Time were big with the Expectation of it; nothing could be welcomer to them, or more greedily received, than this News from our Saviour, and his confirming it with Miracles, as it immediately follows

(e) *Transfertur ἰδέν ἔς ad mentis Oculos, ut ἔς videre pro intel- ligere, animadvertere*, Scap. in Voce εἰδέν. (f) Mat. ix. 2. Acts xiv. 9. Mark xii. 28. Luke ix. 47. Mark viii. 33. (g) Mat. iv. 23, 24, 25.

lows that he did. This is the first Thing then I desire may be taken Notice of, and remember'd, concerning the Circumstances of the Multitudes at this Time; that they greedily entertained this good News, that the *Messiah* was now about to set up his Kingdom.

The other Thing which caused our Saviour to be so much followed at this Time, was a greater Secret; for it was a Doctrine the Rulers of that Church could not bear to be spoke of; tho' it was not only privately whisper'd, but publickly spread and believed among the People, that this same *Jesus* was the *Messiah*; and that tho' he appeared at present in low Circumstances, he would after he had tried the Affections and Inclinations of the People, take upon him a very different Character, and act openly as the *Messiah*: Now that they had generally this Opinion of him, especially they who became his Disciples, will appear to any one who considers the following Particulars.

I. That he had been very plainly described by *John* the Baptist, not only in more dark general Terms; (*b*) *that there was one among them, whose shoe-latchet he was not worthy to unloose*: Tho' even this had a great Meaning, considering that there was no other the People had an Eye to at that Time, but either *Jesus* or himself; and that he himself always positively disowned his being the *Messiah*, and declared himself only his Harbinger or Forerunner. But afterwards *John* was much more positive and particular in this Matter: For pointing *Jesus* out, he said, (*i*) *Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the Sins of the World*.

2. Our Saviour's Doctrine was attended with such a divine Power, Force, and Authority, that the People began all to suspect something extraordinary of him. For they observed that *(k) never Man spake like him: And that (l) he taught them with Authority, and not as the Scribes.*

3. The extraordinary Power of Miracles, which attended him, made them think he was that greater Person *John Baptist* described. *(m) John did no Miracle, say they; but all Things John spake of this Man were true.* His Miracles were so great and many, and so very beneficial, that as they procured him the great following of the People, so they often extorted from them Confessions that he was the *Messiah*. Thus we find the Woman of *Samaria* tells her fellow Citizens; *(n) Come see a Man which told me all Things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?* And so the People when they saw the Miracle of the Loaves, said one to another, *(o) This is of a Truth that Prophet that should come into the World;* and they not only talked thus, but had a Design upon it *to take him by Force and make him a King*, if he had not suddenly withdrawn himself from them. This Notion they had very current among them, and they were ever and anon coming out with it. Thus the Mother of *Zebedee's* Children petitioned in Behalf of her two Sons, *(p) that they might sit, one on his right Hand, and the other on his left, in his Kingdom:* And it was the constant Dispute among his Disciples, *which of them should be greatest in his Kingdom.* The People, after the Resurrection of *Lazarus*, huzza'd him into *Jerusalem* as the *Messiah*:

(k) John vii. 46.*(l)* Mat. vii. 29.*(m)* John x. 41.*(n)* John iv. 29.*(o)* John vi. 14.*(p)* Mat. xx. 20.

Messiah: (q) *Hosannah to the Son of David*; and *blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. (r) This was the good Confession he made before *Pontius Pilate*; and it was so current a Notion, that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* accused him of it before that Governor, (s) *that he made himself a King*; and this was the very Thing he was condemned for; as appears by the Accusation written upon his Cross, (t) *This is Jesus the King of the Jews*. And this was the great Disappointment of his Disciples upon his Death: *We trusted*, said they, *that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel, or have set Israel free*, Luke xxiv. 21. as they express it plainly after his Resurrection, when they were at him with the same Thing still. Acts i. 6. *Lord wilt thou at this Time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?* So that it is most probable, that a great Part of this Multitude, which flocked after *Jesus* from all Parts of the Country, believed he was the *Messiah*; and would in a little Time take upon him that Character.

Let us now lay these Things together, that we may the better gather the Circumstances of these Multitudes, when our Saviour made this Sermon to them. They all in general expected some great Prince, whom they called their *Messiah*; they all greedily embraced our Saviour's good News that *the Kingdom of the Messiah*, called in Scripture *the Kingdom of Heaven*, was now at Hand. The greatest Part of them, especially of those who are called here *his Disciples*, believed that he was the Person: And they had such an Ardour to follow him, that they left House and Home, and be-
took

(q) Māt. xxi. 9.

(r) John xviii. 37.

(s) Luke xxiii. 2.

(t) Mat. xxvii. 37.

took themselves to his Attendance, being every one big with Expectation from him, that they should make their Fortunes in his Service. This being then the State and Condition of the People at this Time, it is very natural to consider what Subject was most proper for our Saviour to entertain them with.

This Question leads me to the last Thing I observe in their Circumstances; which is, that tho' they expected the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and had an extraordinary Opinion of *Jesus* as the Person, and spread his Fame, and flocked after him in great Numbers; they had nevertheless exceeding gross carnal Notions of this his Kingdom, and were in a very bad Temper and Disposition of Mind for the Reception of it. They thought it was a Kingdom which would flow in Wealth and sensual Pleasures, and that it would gratify their carnal Appetites to the utmost, in enriching them with the Spoils, and satiating them with the Pleasures attending a full Revenge and Conquest over their Enemies. So that all the Disposition they were in for the Kingdom of the *Messiah* was, that they had Minds full of Covetousness, Ambition, Oppression, Luxury, Lust, Cruelty, Desire of Conquest, and Revenge; all which wicked Inclinations and Dispositions they were in Hopes to gratify to the utmost, from the Victories and Prosperity they expected in that new State of Things, under the *Messiah*. Now because it is this Temper, and these Inclinations of the People, and the Disciples, which I take to have given the true Occasion to this divine Sermon, and to be *THE RIGHT KEY* to unlock the Meaning of it; it will be fit we prove first that this was the Tem-

per of their Mind at this Time, and that they followed our Saviour upon these carnal Expectations; and that it was most proper for him in the first Place to correct these wicked Inclinations and Dispositions, before he taught them any Thing else.

That the Multitudes were possessed with these carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, appears every where throughout the History of the Gospels, and that not only among the ignorant Sort, but their great and learned Men, and even our Saviour's best Disciples, the twelve Apostles. I shall not need to labour, this Point being universally granted; yet because I make this *the Occasion of the Sermon*, which I think is a new Observation, I will distinctly make out these three Things, which I suppose will sufficiently demonstrate the Truth of it.

1. That both the Multitudes and our Saviour's Disciples, who were his Hearers at this Time, were prepossessed with carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom.

2. That this was of all Things the most necessary in the first Place to obviate and prevent the evil Consequences of such Notions in the Minds of Men, as obstructing all the future Benefit of our Saviour's Doctrine among them.

3. That the Doctrine of this Sermon (particularly this of *the Beatitudes*) is excellently levelled for that End, even to root out of the Minds of his Hearers the wrong Belief, and the bad Dispositions of Mind, which were the Consequences of this wrong Notion of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*.

First, That both the Multitudes, and our Saviour's Disciples, who were his Hearers at this Time, were prepossessed with carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom. By carnal Notions of it I mean, that it was to be like one of the temporal Kingdoms of this World, for Wealth, and Grandeur, Ease and Pleasure, Conquest and Revenge, and that the Followers of the *Messiah* expected to make their Fortunes, as to this World, in his Service. The Truth of this Observation will be evident from the following Particulars.

1. We find upon the first News that the *Messiah* was born, (which was brought to *Jerusalem* by the *Eastern Magi*) a very great Consternation in the Court of (*u*) *Herod* and all *Jerusalem*: He fearing a dangerous Rival, and they the Wars and Troubles which commonly attend Kingdoms and States, upon such Competitions to the Throne. What was the meaning of this, but that they expected the *Messiah* would be a temporal Prince? This is further confirmed from the bloody Execution which *Herod* ordered of all the Children in (*w*) *Bethlehem*, and all the Country thereabouts, according to the Time and Place of the Birth of the *Messiah*, which he had diligently inquired of the Wise Men. This Action shews that his Jealousy of the *Messiah* was kindled to a very great Height; and that this Jealousy continued all his Days, and a great Part of his Son's Days, appears from the Flight of (*x*) *Joseph* with the Child and his Mother into *Egypt*, and his not adventuring to return again to *Judea* till *Herod* was dead, and the News was hush'd of the *Messiah*.

2. Our Saviour's

(*u*) Mat. ii. 3.
21, 22.

(*w*) Mat. ii. 16.

(*x*) Mat. ii. 19, 20,

Saviour's many Reproofs of the *Ambition* of his Disciples while they strove (y) *which of them should be the greatest in his Kingdom*, are plain Demonstrations that he thought they mistook the Nature of it; and his reprehending the Multitudes that they followed him (z) *for the Loaves*, that is, for their own temporal Ends; is a clear Proof of the same Thing. 3. The Accusation of him by his Enemies before *Pontius Pilate*, that *he made himself a King*, and their urging to *Pilate*, that (a) *if he was a Friend of Cæsar's he could not let him go*; shews plainly that they looked upon him as a Rival of *Cæsar's*, and a dangerous Person, that might usurp the Government. 4. *Lastly*, The great Disappointment of his Disciples upon his Death, and their not forbearing even then, to signify what their Hopes had been, that he was the Person, (b) *who should have redeemed Israel*; and the strange Question put to him after his Resurrection, by the Apostles assembled in a full Body, (c) *if he would at that Time restore again the Kingdom to Israel*; are plain Proofs that they, as well as all the rest of the People, looked upon him as one that they trusted would be a great earthly Prince, and rescue the Kingdom of *Israel* from Subjection to the *Roman Yoke*, and gloriously reign over them himself.

Secondly, This being laid down, that both the People and the Disciples expected that the *Messiah* would set up a worldly Kingdom; and that looking upon *Jesus* as the *Christ* or *Messiah*, they flocked after him in great Numbers upon that Account, it was of all Things the most necessary
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(y) Mark ix. 34, 35. (z) John vi. 26. (a) John xix. 12.
(b) Luke xxiv. 21. (c) Acts i. 6.

for him to rectify these their carnal Notions, and to tell them what were the right Preparations and Dispositions of Mind for the new State of Things under the *Messiah*, commonly called in the New Testament *the Kingdom of Heaven*. This of the *Messiah's* worldly Kingdom was such a fundamental Error, that it was really in vain to offer any other spiritual Points of Doctrine to be believed, or Rules of Life to be put in Practice, till they were undeceived in this Matter; this alone being sufficient to poison all the good wholesome Truths that could be taught them. For was it not very natural for any Man prepossess'd with this Notion, to aim at some high Preferment in the *Messiah's* Service, and consequently to let into his Mind abundance of covetous and ambitious Thoughts and Designs? Was it not very natural for such a one to feed himself with the Fancy of living a jovial sensual Life, as to eating, drinking, building, purchasing, and all the utmost Gratifications of Luxury? Was it not natural for such a one to flatter himself that he should have a full Revenge and Satisfaction of all his Enemies, and triumphantly lay them at his Feet? Was it not natural for him, instead of applying himself to the honest, but laborious and tedious Ways of providing for himself and his Family, by the way of a lawful Calling, to apply himself to the unjust quick Ways of Conquest, and getting by the Power of the Sword? Was it not natural for them, in order to their carrying on their ambitious Projects by the Sword, to put off all Bowels of Compassion, and to resolve cruelly to go through with their Designs, and to cut off all that stood in the Way of them? Was it not likewise a natural

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Consequence of this Notion, to expect to gratify their Lusts and carnal Appetites with as great Variety of tempting Objects, as they could desire or project, and as they thought would be at their Devotion upon subduing the flourishing *Roman Empire*; and, in order to all this, to set the World in a Flame by Wars and Tumults, Insurrections and Rebellions; and to persecute to the utmost all that stood in their Way, without any Thoughts of forgiving the Injuries, or of patiently bearing the Losses they had sustained from their Enemies. Now could any Thing be more contrary to Christianity than all these Dispositions of Mind; or could any Good be wrought upon Men so poisoned with such wrong Principles? Certainly then it must be granted that it was very necessary that these should be rectified in the first Place, and that that Rubbish should be removed, before any solid Foundation of good Doctrine could be laid. But now,

Thirdly, I come to shew that the Doctrine of this Sermon on the Mount, particularly this of the *Beatitudes*, is excellently levelled at this End, at the rooting out the wrong Dispositions of Mind which were the natural and immediate Consequences of these carnal Notions of Christ's Kingdom; and therefore we may safely judge this Temper of the People, and of the Disciples, gave the Occasion to it. This will appear much better, when we come to consider the particular Parts of the Sermon; but in general, to take a View of it, what is the Purport of all these *Beatitudes*, but to tell all Men who were the happy Persons that were fit for the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and to give such Descriptions of them, as were directly
contrary

contrary to the bad Dispositions of Mind they labour'd under, occasioned by their carnal Notions of that Kingdom? What more contrary to Covetousness and Ambition, than (d) *Poverty in Spirit*? What more contrary to a sensual, luxurious Life, than a Spirit of (e) *Humiliation, Mourning and Repentance*? What more contrary to Fierceness, Fury, and Revenge, than a Spirit of (f) *Meekness and Humility*; or to Rapine and unjust Conquest, than a Spirit of (g) *Justice and Righteousness*? What more inconsistent with Hard-heartedness and Cruelty, than (h) *Mercifulness and Compassion*; or with Lust and Uncleaness, than (i) *Purity of Heart*? What more contrary to Litigiousness, Insurrections, and Rebellions, than to be (k) *peaceable and Peace-makers*? Or to persecuting others, than (l) *Patience and Martyrdom*? So that I think it is very plain, if we can gather our Saviour's Design in this *his looking upon the Multitudes*, either from the present bad Temper of their Minds, or from the Consideration of what was at this Time most proper and necessary to be offered to Men in their Circumstances, or from what he actually spoke to them in these Beatitudes; we must conclude that the Occasion of the Sermon was the Consideration of the poor People, gladly receiving *the good News of the Kingdom of the Messiah*, and believing in *Jesus*, as the Person; but most grossly mistaken in the Nature of that Kingdom, taking it for a *worldly Kingdom*, and such a one as was to be obtained in the same

(d) Mat. v. 3.

(e) Ver. 4.

(f) Ver. 5.

(g) Ver. 6.

(h) Ver. 7.

(i) Ver. 8.

(k) Ver. 9.

(l) Ver. 10.

same Way with other worldly Kingdoms, *viz.* in the Way of Covetousness, Ambition, Cruelty and Conquest, and the same Way to be made use of for all the Purposes of Luxury and Sensuality: Most terrible Notions, which would have pulled up by the Roots all the Principles of the Moral Law and Natural Religion.

And as our Saviour lays this Foundation in the Beatitudes, the rest of the Sermon is a Descant on the same Ground: For after he has shewed what sort of Persons the Subjects of the *Messiah's* Kingdom ought to be, he tells these his first Disciples not only how they must abstain from the gross Vices of the worldly Spirit, but what eminent Degrees of Virtue he expected of them, whom he was to make use of to preserve the rest of Mankind from those Errors and Corruptions; (*m*) and desires them by no Means to feed themselves with the Fancy as if he were come to loosen them from the Obligation of the Moral Law, (*n*) which these carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom were apt to make them believe: So far from that, that he came, instead of dissolving the Law, to finish and perfect it, by teaching them higher Degrees of Holiness and Virtue, than their best Doctors, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, had taught. (*o*) And so all that follows in the Sermon is only to instruct them in higher Degrees of all Virtues, especially such Virtues as had been most misrepresented to them, and were most directly opposite to their carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom; as, God willing, shall appear by the Particulars, when we come to treat of them. So much then for the first Inquiry I proposed to

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(*m*) Mat. v. 13, 14.

(*n*) Ver. 17.

(*o*) Ver. 20.

make from the Words concerning the Occasion of the Sermon ; a Discovery which we shall find of good Use in helping us to the true Sense and Meaning of it ; there being no better Way to find out the Meaning of any Author, than to observe well the Scope and Design which he aims at in his Discourse. It seems to me an essential Defect, that hitherto this has not so much as been inquired after ; and it is no wonder that for want of such a Guide, how to steer their Course, Interpreters have gone often wrong in the Explication of the particular Parts of the Sermon, and have lost the Clew and Method of it ; as we shall have Occasion to observe, when we come to them.

I shall observe but one Thing more from our Saviour's *Looking on the Multitudes*, namely, that if this Sermon was made upon his observing the present State and Circumstances of the People, this ought to be a good Example both to Pastors and People. To Pastors, that in the Choice of their Subjects, and the Manner of handling them, they have the Circumstances of their Hearers chiefly in their Eye, and adapt their Discourses to their Necessities and Edification : And then to the People, that they take no Offence, when necessary, free, and useful Truths are deliver'd to them (tho' ever so contrary to their worldly Interest and Expectations;) as if the Preacher design'd to have a Fling at them ; but that they learn to suffer *the Word of Exhortation* ; and not only to suffer it, but to apply it to their own Edification and Salvation.

As to the other Inquiry I promised to make concerning the proper Auditors of the Sermon, I find I must refer it to another Opportunity. Now God blefs what we have heard, and give us a right Understanding in all Things: *To him be all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever.*

S E R M O N II.

MAT V. I.

And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him.

Ver. 2. *And he opened his Mouth, and taught them, saying.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

IN a former Discourse on these Words, there were two Things I proposed to inquire into from them, both very proper to be considered in a Preface to this excellent Sermon on the Mount. The first was concerning the Scope, Design, and Occasion of the Sermon; which I observed was, to undeceive the People and our Saviour's Disciples, as to the carnal Notions they had of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and the wrong Dispositions of Mind they were infected with, occasioned by these carnal Notions. And this I have already considered from these first Words of the Preface, *And seeing* (that is, *looking upon, or considering*) *the Multitudes*.

I proceed now to the second Inquiry, namely, who are the proper Auditors to whom this Sermon is addressed; both from the first Words, *And seeing the Multitudes*, and more especially from these last Words of the Preface, *His Disciples*
came

came unto him, and he opened his Mouth and taught them. This is a Question of some Difficulty, and of no small Importance; for upon the right Determination of it will depend the Sense and Meaning of the several Parts of the ensuing Sermon: And therefore I hope the Reader will pardon my unusual Length in settling of this Point, as being the Foundation of all the following Discourses.

There are two Sorts of Auditors here mentioned, the *Multitudes*, and the *Disciples*. I shall enquire particularly into both.

First, That our Saviour designed in this Sermon to teach the *Multitudes*, and that his going up into the Mountain was in order to it, that he might be the better seen and heard by them, and more at Leisure to teach them in a retired Place, and not as some have fancied, that he might withdraw his Disciples from the Crowd, and give them their Lesson and Instructions apart; I am convinced from several Things I observe from the Text it self. For, 1. The express Design and Occasion of the Sermon was to undeceive both the *Multitudes* and our Saviour's *Disciples*, as to the carnal Expectations they had from the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and to work in them quite contrary Dispositions of Mind to those which they brought along with them, when they began first to follow him, as I have shewed in the foregoing Discourse. 2. There is nothing in this Sermon that he needed to make a Secret of, but, on the contrary, it is all of it very proper to inform the People, if they intended to follow him, with what Dispositions of Mind they were to enter into his School; how instead of a Life of Licentiousness, Rapine, and unjust Conquest, directly contrary to the Pre-

cepts of the Moral Law, he expected they should live better Lives than any of the strictest Sects among the *Jews*, and carry their Obedience of the Moral Law to a greater Pitch, if they intended to have any Share in the Kingdom of the *Messiah*: The Consideration, I say, how proper and pertinent this Doctrine was, even for the Multitudes, if there were nothing else, would induce me to believe our Saviour had an Eye to them in it all. And I am so much the more of this Opinion, because I observe it was his usual Custom, when he saw any about to follow him possessed with worldly Hopes and Expectations, and averse from Sufferings, presently to undeceive them, and to tell them how few worldly Encouragements, and how much of the Cross, and what Occasions for Self-denial they were to have in his Service. Thus when a certain Scribe offered himself to be one of his Retinue, (a) and told him he would follow him whithersoever he went; our Saviour knowing what he aimed at, told him what a poor Life he must expect in his Service. *The Foxes have Holes*, says he, *and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head.* And when his Disciples shewed a mighty Aversion to his Sufferings, upon his first acquainting them therewith, and particularly *Peter* took upon him to rebuke him on that Account, *Mark* viii. 34. he not only severely reprimanded *Peter*, but thought fit to undeceive all Mankind, who expected a Life of Ease in his Service; for it is said upon that Occasion, *that calling the People unto him, with his Disciples also*, he said unto them, *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself,*
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(a) *Mat.* viii. 19.

and take up his Cross and follow me. But we have still clearer Proof of this Matter: For, 3. We have a Hint in the Close of the Sermon here, which clearly discovers not only that the People were Hearers of it all the while, but that our Saviour designed to teach them the Things which are here delivered. For it is said, Chap. vii. 28. *that when Jesus had ended these Sayings, the People were astonished at his Doctrine; for he taught them, as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.* And Chap. viii. 1. (b) *that as he came down from the Mountain great Multitudes followed him; not as we render it, when he was come down: And therefore they must have been with him on the Mount where the Sermon was preached.* 4. Tho' there wants no further Proof of this Truth, it will cast great Light upon the Matter to observe what St. *Luke* says in his Account of a Sermon like this; whether it be the very same, or another to the same Purpose preached at some other Time, Interpreters are divided in their Opinions: But either Way it will afford us a good Argument that the People are proper Auditors of this Sermon. For if it be the same, by what St. *Luke* says, which I shall quote presently, the Question will be soon decided, that the People made a Part of the Auditory: And if it be not the same, yet by a Parity of Reason it will follow, if the People were designed by our Saviour to be the Hearers of that Sermon in the sixth Chapter of St. *Luke*, which contains the very same Doctrine with this; there is no Inconvenience in making them the

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(b) Καταβάντι ὃ αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆ ὄρει ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί. *Descendentem autem eum à monte, secuta est turba multa.*
Beza in Loc. & Ar. Mont.

Auditors of this Sermon too, seeing the Words will so fairly bear it. Now St. *Luke* takes express Care, both in the Beginning, and in the End of the Sermon, which he gives us an Account of, to let us know, that not only our Saviour's Disciples, but the People, were Auditors of it all the while. For before he enters upon that Sermon, he acquaints us very particularly who were the Hearers ; (c) Telling us, that *Jesus came down with the Twelve, and stood in the Plain, and the Company of his Disciples, and a great Multitude of People out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the Sea-Coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their Diseases.* Then after an Account of his healing them, follows the Sermon, beginning thus, Luke vi. 20. *And he lifted up his Eyes on his Disciples, and said, Blessed be ye Poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God, &c.* Then after he has given an Account of the Sermon in the sixth Chapter, it follows immediately, in the Beginning of the (d) seventh Chapter, that *he ended all his Sayings in the Audience of the People.* Seeing then both St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, who have given us the Account of this Sermon (or these Sermons) in which the *Beatitudes* are treated, thought it necessary, both in the Beginning, and in the Close of their Accounts, to mention *the People* as a Part of the Auditory ; I must conclude, that either *they* were designed to be taught directly, or that the Lessons which were given to the Disciples *in their Audience*, were likewise designed for their Use. And I am the more confirmed in this, from the Application which our Saviour makes in the End of both these Accounts

(c) Luke vi. 17,

(d) Luke vii. 1.

counts of St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, which is in as general Terms, comprehending all Sorts of Auditors, both People and Disciples, as possibly could be expressed. Therefore (e) *whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock, &c.* (f) *And every one that heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand.* And in the same general Terms St. *Luke* concludes the Sermon, which he gives us an Account of, *Luke* vi. 47, 48, and 49. From all which I conclude, that this Sermon was designed by our Saviour for the general Use of all Men, tho' it might be, and was more immediately addressed to his Disciples, to undeceive them as to their worldly Expectations, and to instruct them more perfectly in their Duty, from which they thought to have been exempted. And who *they* were, is what we are next to enquire into.

Secondly, then, That this Sermon was more immediately addressed to our Lord's *Disciples*, appears both from the Words of the Text, *when he was set, his Disciples came unto him, and he opened his Mouth and taught them*; and from St. *Luke's* Account of the same, or the like Sermon, *Luke* vi. 20. where it is written, that *he lifted up his Eyes, on his Disciples*, and said, *Blessed be ye Poor, &c.* But now the Word *Disciples* being used in a narrower or wider Sense in the *New Testament*, sometimes by way of Excellence only for the Twelve chosen Disciples, called likewise *Apostles*; but much oftener for all *Christ's Scholars*, that is, for all that followed him with a Design to learn any

(e) Mat. vii. 24.

(f) Mat. vii. 26.

any Thing of him, namely, all Christians: There is a necessary Question to be here decided, What is the Meaning of the Word *Disciples* in this Place? For if by it we are to mean only the *Apostles*, and in their apostolical Capacity; it will be a hard Matter to prove that the Doctrine and Precepts of this Sermon are binding upon all Christians, as we generally believe they are: Then we shall leave a large Gap for private Christians to creep out from the Obligations of these Duties, as being designed only for that superior Rank of Apostles. But if it be found that by *Disciples* here, are meant all Christians, as upon a diligent Scrutiny into that Matter I verily believe they are, and shall presently give you some good Reasons for it; then we must conclude that this Sermon is universally binding upon all Christians whatsoever. In order then to the finding out the true Meaning in this Place,

I. It is to be premised in general, that by the Word *Disciples*, are understood in the *New Testament* the Scholars or Followers of any Master or Teacher; as *Mark* ii. 18. we hear of the *Disciples* of *John*, and the *Disciples* of the *Pharisees*, and the *Disciples* of *Jesus*. *Why do the Disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy Disciples fast not?* So *John* ix. 27, 28. the Man whom *Jesus* had restored to his Sight, being born blind, asked the *Pharisees*, when he saw he could not satisfy their Inquisitiveness, why they would hear the same Thing over and over again; *will ye also,* says he, *be his Disciples? Then they reviled him and said, thou art his Disciple, but we are Moses's Disciples.*

2. In this Sense of the Word we find commonly all that followed *Christ*, with a Design to learn of him, all that had a good Opinion of him or his Doctrine; in short, all that were afterwards called *Christians*, go in the *New Testament* by the Name of his *Disciples*, and not the *Apostles* only. Thus *Joseph of Arimathea* is said to be *Jesus's Disciple*, Mat. xxvii. 57. and *John* xix. and he that asked Leave to go first and bury his Father, is called *another of his Disciples*, Mat. viii. 21. Thus St. *Luke* informs us, that our Lord called unto him *his Disciples*, and *of them*, or rather (e) *out of them*, he chose Twelve, whom he also named *Apostles*, Luke vi. 13. And at the seventeenth Verse of that Chapter, besides these Twelve, we hear of *the Company or Multitude of his Disciples*, ὄχλος μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ. And Luke xix. 37. among the Crowds that huzza'd him into *Jerusalem*, we have an Account of *the whole Multitude of the Disciples*, ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν. And St. *John* tells us, *John* vi. 66. that from that Time many of his Disciples went back and walked no more with him, after they found he was not like to answer their worldly Expectations. Now these *Disciples* that forsook him, could be none of the twelve *Apostles*; for it follows immediately, that *Jesus said to the Twelve*, will ye also go away? (f) And *John* iv. 1. it is said, *the Pharisees heard that Jesus made and baptized more Disciples than John*. The same Compellation of *Disciples* was used for all that owned the Doctrine of Christianity, after our Lord's Ascension into Heaven. As *Acts* i. 15. it is said, that *Peter stood up in the midst of the Disciples*: These could

not

(e) ἅπ' αὐτῶν.

(f) *John* vi. 66.

not be the *Apostles* only; for it follows immediately, that *the Number of their Names together was then about an hundred and twenty*. And *Acts* vi. 1. we hear that *the Number of the Disciples was multiplied*. And at the second Verse, that *the Twelve called the Multitude of the Disciples unto them*, to consult with them concerning the Election of Deacons. And at the seventh Verse, that *the Word of God increased, and the Number of the Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*. And Chap. ix. Ver. 1. that *Saul still breathed out Threatning and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord*. And what is meant by this, we may learn from the next Verse, where his Commission, which he desired, was, that *if he found any of this Way, whether Men or Women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem*. And, in short, wherever the Word is used afterwards in the *New Testament*, as it is very frequently, it is constantly used in this Sense; and therefore I shall not need to quote the Places: Only that ye may see that the Word *Disciples* was used then in the same Latitude with the Word *Christians*; which succeeded to it, I shall put you in Mind of one Passage of *St. Luke*, *Acts* xi. 26. which tells us when the Word *Christian* began to be used instead of the Word *Disciple*. *The Disciples*, says he, *were called Christians first in Antioch*. But tho' they were first called *Christians* there, it was long before that Name generally obtained; for as far as the sacred Writings of the *New Testament* go, we find it very rarely used in them; but the Words *Disciples*, *Brethren*, *Believers*, and *the Church*, were generally then in Use. I have insisted so much the longer on this, because by a vulgar Sort of Error

Error I think it is run away with by a great many Readers and Interpreters; that by the Word *Disciples* are to be understood only the *Twelve* chosen *Disciples*, called likewise *Apostles*; and upon this Notion a great Part of this Sermon has, by the greater Number of Interpreters, been restrained to them, without any solid Ground from the Text it self. For tho' I confess the Apostles καὶ ἑξοχῆν are several Times called our Lord's Disciples, yet, as far as I can perceive, they are never so called in any Thing peculiar to the apostolick Office, without the Addition of the Word *Twelve*, or *Eleven*, to distinguish them from ordinary Disciples, and to let us know what belonged to them in their apostolick Capacity: For in other Places where they are called simply *Disciples*, they act in the Capacity of ordinary Learners or *Christians*; and what is said to them in that Capacity, is binding upon all *Christians*. And that the Word *Disciples* here in my Text is to be understood of all our Saviour's Disciples in that larger Sense, that is, of all *Christians*, and not of the *Twelve* only in their apostolick or pastoral Capacity, is what I hope now to prove, to the Satisfaction of unbiassed Judges, and by that Means to put an End to several erroneous Interpretations of divers Parts of this Sermon, which have been occasioned purely by this Mistake.

I. My first Argument to prove this, shall be taken from this Evangelist's Account of the Election of the Twelve Apostles, which is not antecedent, but subsequent to this Sermon, viz. at the tenth Chapter of this Gospel; from whence I argue thus, that if when this Sermon on the Mount was preached there were no such Officers in Be-
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ing as *Apostles*, but all *Christians* were as yet in the Rank of *Disciples*; then what is here said to the *Disciples*, can't fairly be interpreted to be meant of them in their apostolick, but in their common *Christian* Capacity; and consequently this whole Sermon being addressed to the *Disciples*, before any of them were made *Apostles*, must be meant of, and applied properly to all *Christians* in general. I foresee what will be answered to this Argument; it is to be gathered from the learned *Calvin*, and a Multitude of other Commentators, namely, that as to the timing of Things, St. *Matthew* is not always very exact, and does not pretend to give us them in the same Order as they were done, as (g) St. *Luke* doth: And that St. *Luke*, before he gives us an Account of this Sermon, which begins *Luke* vi. 20. doth first, viz. at the thirteenth Verse of that Chapter, give an Account of the Election of the *Twelve Apostles*; and therefore that it is most probable they were elected before this Sermon was preached. This is plausible enough; but I have two or three Things to reply to it, which will sufficiently invalidate the Force of this Answer. 1. That the whole Force of it depends upon a Supposition that this Sermon is the same individual Sermon with that of St. *Luke*, which it will be a hard Matter for any Man to prove, there being much greater Difficulties to be accounted for by them who make them one and the same Sermon, than by them who make them two, and preached at different Times. For all the Inconveniency I can perceive in this last Opinion is, that our Saviour at two several Times, and in two several Places, and, for ought we know, in the Hearing
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(g) *Luke* i. 3.

of two several Crowds of Auditors, preached two Sermons very like to each other. And where's the Harm of this Supposition, that so necessary Doctrine, as this was, might be preached by our Saviour at two several Times, to two several Auditories; nay, if it had been to one and the same Auditory, to urge the same important Truths, and to imprint them more firmly upon his Disciples who were present at both? We find several other Truths which our Saviour urged oftener than once upon his Disciples, not to speak of the Lord's Prayer, which was twice taught, and upon two several Occasions, *Mat. vi. 9.* and *Luke xi. 2.* I will give you one Instance of a Doctrine which our Saviour preached at least six or seven several Times to his Disciples, with less Variation of Expression than there is between *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* in their Accounts of this Sermon; it is his foretelling his Death and Sufferings. *St. Matthew* tells us of this, *Mat. xvi. 21.* after the Question what the World said of him, and after he had found that his Disciples believed him to be the *Christ*. *From that Time*, says *St. Matthew*, *began Jesus to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day.* The same Doctrine, the same *St. Matthew*, Chap. xvii. Ver. 22. tells us, that *Jesus* preached to his Disciples before they came out of *Galilee*; and the same again Chap. xx. Ver. 17. in his last Journey to *Jerusalem*: We have the same a fourth Time, two Days before his last Passover, *Mat. xxvi. 2.* and a fifth Time, Ver. 12. in Justification of *Mary*, *that poured the precious Ointment*
upon

upon him, which he said was against his Burial; and a sixth Time, at his last Supper, Ver. 23. and a seventh Time in the Garden, immediately before he was apprehended, Ver. 45. Here then is a Doctrine recorded by one Evangelist expressly to have been delivered to the same Disciples seven several Times, besides that it was the Subject of the Discourse at the Transfiguration, (b) where were present three of the same Disciples. And now shall any Body wonder if a great Part of this most useful Sermon was preached oftener than once? So that there is no Inconveniency attends this Supposition, that they are two different Sermons, This, and That in the sixth Chapter of *St. Luke*. And if they are, the Order of both Evangelists concerning the Election of the Apostles may be easily reconciled; for they might be only in the Number of common Disciples, when this Sermon was preached, which is recorded by *St. Matthew*, and constituted *Apostles* a little before that Sermon which *St. Luke* gives us an Account of in the sixth Chapter of his Gospel. And if so, all this Answer, concerning the Election of the Apostles, as far as relates to this Sermon, is quite out of Doors. And all that is here said, must be understood to relate to Disciples at large, that is, to all *Christians*; for by this Supposition at that Time there were no other. But they who assert that these two are one and the same Sermon, but once preached, have a great many more Difficulties to account for, namely, for *St. Luke's* omitting above one Half of it; for *St. Luke's* saying that his Sermon was preached in the Plain, when *St. Matthew's* was preached on the Mount; for *St. Luke's* making

(b) *Luke ix. 31.*

making the healing of the *Leper*, and the calling of *Matthew*, prior to his Sermon; whereas *St. Matthew* makes them both posterior to his, besides divers other more minute Variations. But, *Secondly*, Suppose we should grant that these Sermons are both one, but once preached, only more largely rehearsed by *St. Matthew*, and more compendiously by *St. Luke*, and that one or other of them, in Matters not material, might neglect the Chronology; I do not see how this would mend the Matter: For supposing the Apostles had been chosen before this Sermon, as *St. Luke* relates it; it will not follow, that whatever was spoke to them afterwards was spoke in their apostolick Capacity, and not as private *Christians*. For if the general Observation I made before (which I will now more fully repeat) holds good, that whatever is said of, or to the Twelve, under the common Compellation of *Disciples*, (without distinguishing them either in the Place it self, or in the Context, or at least in some parallel Account of some other Evangelist, either by their proper Names, or by their Number of *Twelve*, or *Eleven* after the Death of *Judas*; so that it appears plainly what particular Sort of Disciples are designed) is always to be understood to belong to them in their *Christian*, not their *Apostolick* Capacity: If, I say, this Observation holds good, (as I believe it does, for I have examined all those Places in the *New Testament*, which are upwards of an hundred, and can't find one Exception) then for all the prior Election of Apostles, this Sermon being addressed to our Saviour's *Disciples*, tho' by that Word are comprehended the Persons of the Apostles, yet it belongs to them only as

Disciples, in their *Christian*, not in their *Apostolick* Capacity; and therefore ought to be interpreted as relating to all *Christians*, and not restrained to the Office of Apostles of old, or Pastors and Teachers in following Times. *Thirdly*, To go further still upon this granted Supposition of this and the Sermon in St. *Luke* being all one, and but once preached, (which is more than any Man can prove) yet there are two Things we may observe in St. *Luke's* Account of it, from both which the Limitation of any Part of the Sermon to Apostles falls to the Ground; and it must all of it belong to Disciples at large, or *Christians* in general. The first is, that tho' our Saviour before the Sermon separated the Twelve from the rest of the Disciples, and took them into his own Family; and tho' by way of Distinction and Anticipation they are called *Apostles*, as *Judas*, wherever he is mentioned in the Gospels, and in this very Place, by Anticipation and Distinction, is called or described as *the Traitor*, long before the History of his betraying his Master; yet really even by St. *Luke's* Account, they had not their Commission of Apostles, nor were they chosen into that Office, but only designed for it, till a considerable Time after that Sermon in St. *Luke* was preached: So that both St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* agree in making their apostolick Commission posterior to the Sermon, or Sermons, we are a speaking of. For St. *Matthew* gives an Account of this Sermon in the fifth, sixth, and seventh Chapters of his Gospel, then of the first Commission to work Miracles, and to preach, in the Beginning of the tenth Chapter. St. *Luke* gives an Account of the Sermon Chap. 6. then of the Apostles Commission to work

Miracles, and to preach the Gospel, in the Beginning of Chap. 9. and it is the very same first Commission and Instructions St. *Matthew* has in his tenth Chapter. It is true, Chap. vi. 13. St. *Luke* gives an Account of the Election of *the Twelve*, before the Sermon, but, as Interpreters generally confess, that was only *Christ's* separating them from the rest of the Disciples, and taking them into his own Family: For they were not properly Apostles till they had their Commission, only *Christ* thought fit to take them nearer to his own Person for some Time, the better to prepare them for that high Office, in which he designed to employ them afterwards. This is not only a Conjecture, which the Nature of the Thing, and the reconciling St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* suggests; but St. *Mark* too very clearly points at it, when he mentions the first Separation of the *Twelve*, which St. *Matthew* had omitted in its proper Place, and did not speak of till he came to their Commission. For St. *Mark*, Chap. iii. 14. gives this Account of the Matter: *And he ordained (or appointed) Twelve (i) that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have Power to heal Sicknesses, and to cast out Devils*; where the first Thing that was to follow upon this Designation was, that *they were to be with Christ*, his inseparable Companions, to be fitted there for the other high Office of Apostleship which was to follow. And Chronologists, particularly the learned Dr. *Lightfoot*, in his Chronicle, proves that there was about the Space of a Year between the first assuming them into *Christ's* Family, and the sending them out as Apostles. St. *Mark* too takes

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Notice

(i) Ἐποίησε δώδεκα, i.e. *he appointed Twelve*.

Notice of a great Space of Time between the first separating the *Twelve*, when they were taken into *Christ's* Family, and the sending them out with the apostolick Commission: The first he has Chap. iii. 14. and the other not till Chap. vi. 7. If then they were not made Apostles till after the Sermon, even by St. *Luke's* Account, as well as St. *Matthew's*; then this Sermon, nor any Part of it, could be addressed to them in that Capacity. The other Thing we may observe from St. *Luke's* Account of this Sermon (for we are still upon the Supposition that his and St. *Matthew's* are both one) is, that in describing the Hearers of the Sermon, after he had named first the *Twelve* chosen Disciples who were then separated, and afterwards made Apostles; he mentions next *the Company of our Saviour's Disciples*, that is, all his other Scholars whom he taught: Then, thirdly, *great Multitudes of People out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the Sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their Diseases*, *Luke* vi. 17. It follows, Ver. 20. *that he lifted up his Eyes on his Disciples and said, blessed be ye Poor, &c.* Now if the *Disciples*, on whom he lifted up his Eyes, Ver. 20. be the same *Company of Disciples* mentioned Ver. 17. allowing the *Twelve* into the Number of *Disciples*, (for it is confessed of all Sides that they were still *Disciples*;) then it follows very plainly, that the proper Auditors of this Sermon are all our Saviour's Disciples in general, *the Twelve*, and all the rest in their *Christian* Capacity, that is, all *Christians*: And that the Sermon is not restrained to *the Twelve* only, nor addressed to them in their apostolick Capacity. So much for the Hints which are given us of the proper

proper Auditors of this Sermon by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, who give us the Accounts of it. There are several other plain Observations may be made to the same Purpose from the Body of the Sermon it self; but having already exceeded our usual Time, I must refer what remains to another Opportunity, when I hope to shew the great Importance, as well as the Truth of this Doctrine, concerning the proper Auditors of this Sermon, and the Influence it ought to have upon our Lives and Conversations. Now God bless what we have heard, and give us a right Understanding in all Things: *To him let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N III.

MAT. V. I.

And seeing the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him.

Ver. 2. *And he opened his Mouth, and taught them, saying.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

NOT to trouble you with Repetition, the Point we were last upon was to find out who were the proper Hearers of this Sermon; a Point of the greatest Consequence, both for the right Interpretation of the whole Sermon, and to prevent the Subterfuges of a great many, who would be glad to creep out from the strict Duties here enjoined, as not being designed for private *Christians*, but for the higher Office of Apostles: The Hearers of the Sermon, I observed to you, were the *Multitudes*, and the *Disciples*; by the *Multitudes* I understand those promiscuous Crowds that followed our Saviour either for Cures, or to satisfy their Curiosity; to see and hear so wonderful a Person, that wrought so many Miracles, tho' they did not as yet believe in him. And by the *Disciples* I understand those who not only followed him, but
so

so far believed in him, as to chuse him for their Master and Teacher; and I suppose many of them believed him to be the *Messiah*, and were baptized in his Name^(a). The chief Error Interpreters have run upon, occasioned by this Word *Disciples*, is the limiting of them to the Twelve chosen *Disciples* in their apostolick Capacity; whereas what is here said to the *Disciples*, is to be understood of *Disciples* at large, that is, *Christians* in general, and not to be limited to *Apostles*. I observed to you, that this was the constant Use of the Word in the *New Testament*, and that if at any Time it was restrained to those few chosen *Disciples*, who were likewise called *Apostles*, in their apostolick or pastoral Capacity, Care was taken, by the Addition of the Number *Twelve*, or *Eleven* after the Apostacy of *Judas*, that one or other of the Evangelists did plainly intimate to us that Designation; and in all other Places, where there is no such Limitation, that by the Word *Disciples* are meant in general all *Christians*: Or if by the Context the *Twelve chosen Disciples* are intended, yet what is said to, or of them, without these express Limitations, is said in their *Christian*, and not in their *Apostolick* Capacity. Having observed thus much of the Use of the Word *Disciples* in the *New Testament* in general, which is sufficient to ground my Interpretation upon; yet because so great a Structure is to be built upon this Foundation, and because this leads me in a Way so different from many other learned Interpreters; I undertook further to make out by clear Arguments from the Text and Context, that by the Word *Disciples*, in this Preface, are to be meant *Disciples*

(a) John iii. 22. and iv. 1.

at large, that is, *Christians* in general, without any Limitation to the *Twelve chosen Disciples* in their apostolick Capacity, tho' they are included as *Disciples*. From whence it will clearly follow, that whatever is afterwards said in the Sermon, (unless otherwise specified and directed than in this Preface,) belongs entirely to all *Christians* in general, and is by no Means to be limited to *Apostles*, or their Successors the Bishops and Pastors of the Church.

The first Argument I made use of to prove this, was, that the constituting of Apostles was posterior to this Sermon; and that they who were afterwards made Apostles at the Time when this Sermon was preached, were as yet but in the Rank of *Disciples*, and had not then their apostolical Commission. This I proved at large from the Relations of St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, who are the only Writers that have left us an Account of this Sermon, and have been much more careful to clear this Matter, than Interpreters are aware of.

I proceed now to another sort of Arguments, taken from Observations upon the Body of the Sermon it self, by which I doubt not to make it very plain, that unless we will go contrary to all the Rules of speaking and reasoning, this Sermon must be understood as directed to all *Christians*, and ought not to be limited to Apostles or Pastors.

I. *First*, then, It appears from the Sermon it self, that it is all address'd to one Auditory; there are no Words, no not so much as Looks or Glances mentioned, from which we may be allow'd to infer that some Parts of it are designed for ordinary

nary *Christians*, and some other Parts for Apostles. From which Observation I argue thus; that if by the Word *Disciples* we are to understand the Twelve Apostles exclusive of common *Christians*, then the whole Sermon must be addressed to Apostles; and it is by Chance if private *Christians* have any Thing to do with it. All the *Ye's*, and *You's*, and *Thou's*, and all the Verbs that are used here in the second Person, I would fain know who they are address'd to; for it is an unaccountable Liberty to allow an Interpreter out of a great many Precepts, which by the ordinary Sense and Meaning of the Words are addressed to the same Auditors, to say that some of these *Ye's* belong only to one sort of Hearers, and some of them, perhaps, in the same Sentence, to another: For Example, who could bear it, if an Interpreter should say that these Words, Ver. 11. (b) *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you*, belong to all *Christians*; and the next *Ye*, almost in the same Breath; (c) *Ye are the Salt of the Earth, and ye are the Light of the World*, belong only to Apostles; and the next again in the same Paragraph, (d) *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*, belong to all *Christians*? Is not this to abuse any Author, and to give the Interpreter a lawless Liberty of putting what Sense he pleases upon him; nay, Senses totally incoherent and inconsistent with the common Rules of Speech? Since, then, it must be confess'd that the far greatest Part of this Sermon will bear no other Sense but to be address'd to *Disciples* at large, that is, *Christians* in general, and yet in one

conti-

(b) Mat. v. 11, 12.

(c) Mat. v. 13.

(d) Mat. v. 16.

continued Tenor of Discourse it is all addressed to one and the same Auditory; that Auditory must be *Christians* in general, unless there be something of particular *Apostrophe* by Looks, or Gestures, or Words, or the Necessity of the Matter, that obliges us to believe it is designed for any other Hearers. And that this is not the Case in any of the Addresses of this Sermon; that there is nothing said in them but what is very proper for *Christians* in general, might be easily demonstrated, but that it would be too great a Digression in this Place, and will come in more properly when we come to explain those Passages of the Sermon which have by some been thought to be Descriptions of the Duty and Character of Apostles: There it shall be shewed, that all *Christians* (e) are *the Salt of the Earth*, that is, that they are all to be instrumental in seasoning and sanctifying the putrid Conversation of the World, and in preserving Men from Corruption; and likewise that all *Christians* are to be so far (f) *the Light of the World*, as to shine brightly in it by a most exemplary Conversation; and these two are the only Passages that seem to look more particularly towards the apostolical or pastoral Function. And therefore there is no Occasion in the least to vary the Meaning of the Address throughout the whole Sermon; but they are the same *Ye* that are meant, when our Saviour says, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, and *ye are the Light of the World*; as when he says, *After this Manner*, (g) *pray ye, Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.* (h) or *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you,*

(e) Mat. v. 13.
(h) Mat. vii. 12.

(f) Mat. v. 14.

(g) Mat. vi. 9.

you, do even so to them; and when he gives them all the other excellent Precepts contained in this incomparable Sermon, which is the best Collection of common *Christian* Duties of any in the World.

2. Next to the Address, if we will consider the Occasion, Scope, and Design of the whole Discourse, which, as I have already shewed, was to correct the common Errors about the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and to cure Men's wrong Dispositions for it; this must convince us that the proper Auditors of it are all our Saviour's Disciples in general, and not the Twelve only: For all these Errors and bad Dispositions being general, there is all Reason to interpret these Precepts of our Saviour, which are designed to cure those Errors and Distempers, in a general Sense, and as directed to the Community of Auditors; otherwise the Remedy would not be proportioned to the Distemper, and the Plaister would be narrower than the Sore. Besides, how incongruous a Thing would it be, when even the promiscuous Multitudes, as I formerly shewed, were taught by this Sermon, to exclude any of our Lord's Disciples, or to limit the Discourse to the *Twelve* only?

3. The many excellent Precepts contained in this Sermon, do all of them manifestly belong to the Duty of *Christians* in general, and not one of them is to be limited to the apostolical Function; and therefore the proper Auditors of this Sermon must be all *Christians*, in their *Christian*, not *Apostles* and Pastors in their Apostolick or Pastoral Capacity. I know not so much as one Duty here recommended, which those very Interpreters who
make

make a great Part of the Sermon to relate to the apostolick Function, will not confefs to be a Duty incumbent on private *Christians*, except one, by a Mistake of a new Opinion, which I shall consider in a Postscript to this Discourse. Is it not then much more probable that it is designed for *Disciples* at large, that is, for all *Christians*, whose Duty it exactly describes; than for *Apostles*, none of whose Duty it describes, but in so far as is common to them with other *Christians*?

4. The many excellent Arguments with which the Precepts of this Sermon are backed and enforced, are all taken from Considerations equally binding upon all *Christians*, and not one of them peculiar to the apostolical Function. I shall shew this in the Postscript to this Sermon, as to the Arguments brought to dissuade from Covetousness, and the inordinate Cares of the World. The same may be observed of all the other Duties; they are all enforced with Considerations taken from the Perfection of *Christianity*, and from the Promises of Admission to the Kingdom of Heaven, and Threatnings of Exclusion from it, or some other Reasons equally binding upon all: And therefore whatever Force is in them, it equally relates to all *Christians*.

5. I shall add but one Consideration more, taken from the Form and Stile of this Sermon, as the former have been from the Matter of it. And as to this,

(1.) I can't but observe what a different Stile St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* use, when they intend to acquaint us with any Thing peculiar to *Apostles*, from what they use with relation to *Disciples* or *Christians* in general; for as here, and in St. *Luke*

too, both in the Beginning and End of the Sermon, Care is taken to mention *the People and the Disciples* as Hearers; so in the tenth Chapter of this Gospel, where we have the first apostolical Commission, the same Care is taken, both at the Beginning and End, and in divers other Parts of that Discourse, to limit it to *the Twelve*: For at the first Verse he tells us how *Christ* called unto him *his twelve Disciples*; at the second Verse he calls them *the twelve Apostles*; then follow all their Names; then at the fifth Verse, *these Twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying*; then when that Discourse was ended, Chap. x. it follows immediately, Chap. xi. 1. that *Jesus made an End of commanding his twelve Disciples*: It is very observable, I say, how the Evangelist alters his Stile, and how carefully he distinguishes between his Description of *Disciples* at large, or common *Christians*, and the *twelve* chosen *Disciples*, called *Apostles*. And in like manner St. Luke, Chap. ix. 1. describing the apostolick Commission, begins thus; *Then he called his twelve Disciples together*, &c.

(2.) I observe that there is no Variation of the Address throughout the whole Sermon, but it is the same Auditory to which it is all directed; nay, there is not so much as a Look or Gesture taken Notice of, as there is in some other Parts of the Gospels, when our Saviour means to reach other Persons than those to whom he immediately directs his Discourse. To give one Instance of what I mean by this Observation, St. Mark relates the History of our Saviour's rebuking *Peter* for contradicting him so rashly when he foretold his Passion, and of his correcting that Spirit of his, which

which was so averſe to the Croſs. And there is in that Hiſtory one Circumſtance of our Saviour's Looks taken Notice of, which is very inſtructive. We have it *Mark viii. 33. When he had turned about, ſays he, and looked on his Diſciples, he rebuked Peter, ſaying, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou ſavour'eſt not the Things that be of God, but the Things that be of Men.* This *Look on the other Diſciples* implies, that tho' *Peter* had the Forwardneſs to come out with this his Averſion to the Croſs, the reſt of our Saviour's *Diſciples*, tho' ſilent, were of the ſame Opinion; and therefore *St. Mark* records this, *Look on the Diſciples*, as joined with this Rebuke of *Peter*. Now if there were any the leaſt Intimation, in all this Sermon, that our Saviour had ſo much as by his Looks or Geſtures directed any Part of it to *the Twelve*, excluſive of others, I ſhould readily conſent to interpret ſuch Part as relating to the apoſtolick or paſtoral Function, or both. But while neither the Letter of the Words, nor the Ceremony of the Looks and Actions, favour any ſuch Conjecture, nor the Matter of the Diſcourſe neceſſarily requires it; I muſt think it much ſafer and better, and more agreeable to our Lord's Intention, as well as to the exact Rules of Speaking and Reaſoning, to interpret theſe general Precepts as meant of, and to all *Chriſtians*; than to reſtrain any of them to Paſtors and *Apoſtles*: Or if any Thing is to be gathered from our Saviour's Looks, it is, that the Doctrines of this Sermon belongs to *all Men*; for what we render here, *Seeing the Multitudes*; might be as well rendered, *Looking upon the Multitudes*. For ſo we tranſlate the

the same Word in that forecited Place, (i) *Mark* viii. 33.

(3.) The last Thing I shall observe from the Stile of the Sermon is, that from all the *Comparisons* and *Antitheses* used in it, it appears the Sermon was designed to teach *Christians* their Duty in general, as they are distinguished from *Heathens*, *Hypocrites*, *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; but not *Pastors* their particular Duty, as distinct from that of *Laicks* and common People. For the Comparisons and Antitheses run thus: (k) *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.* (l) *When thou dost thine Alms, do not sound a Trumpet before thee as the Hypocrites do.* And when thou prayest thou shall not be as the Hypocrites (m). And when ye fast be not as the Hypocrites (n). Use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do (o). After all these Things do the Gentiles seek, &c. (p). So that all along Christianity is set in Opposition to *Judaism*, *Heathenism*, *Pharisaism* and *Hypocrisy*; but in the whole Sermon there is not any Comparison or Antithesis between *Apostles* or *Pastors*, and *private Christians*.

This great Truth being thus so firmly established, there are a few Corollaries I shall just name as resulting from it, which I shall rather hint, than insist upon, having already been too long in clearing and asserting this much-neglected Point of the Auditors of this Sermon on the Mount.

1. Then,

(i) Καὶ ἰδὼν τὰς μαθητάς αὐτοῦ, and looked on his Disciples.

(k) Mat. v. 20.

(l) Mat. vi. 2.

(m) Mat. vi. 5.

(n) Mat. vi. 16.

(o) Mat. vi. 7.

(p) Mat. vi. 32.

1. Then, Let this direct us in our Interpretation of the whole Sermon, and it will save us from divers Errors Interpreters have run upon, both in their Commentaries and Controversies. There are several Things the Church of *Rome* appropriates to the Clergy, or to the Monastick Orders; and several Things Enthusiasts mistake, by extending them to the Magistrate's Office; all which Errors might be avoided, by remembering what has been now so fully proved, that the Persons properly instructed in this Sermon are *private Christians*; and that neither the Magistrate's, nor Pastor's Office, nor any other particular Relation of Men, is here touched or described.

2. From this Doctrine it will follow, that there is no Duty here enjoined which the private *Christian* may creep out of; there is no such Gap to be opened, as if there were any Part of this Sermon not binding upon all private *Christians*, as such.

3. From hence we may observe the great Perfection of the *Christian* Morals, far beyond what ever the World was taught before; and I am sure very far beyond what is practised by *Christians* at this Day. Let this be well considered, and let our Lives be new-modelled by this excellent Scheme; and then it will appear what a beautiful Thing *Christianity* is, and how necessary it is that we be exhorted, that our *Conversation be such as becomes the Gospel*.

4. If any Thing is to be inferred with Relation to the *twelve chosen Disciples*, who (if this be the same Sermon with that in *St. Luke*) were before the Sermon separated from the rest, and assumed

sumed into *Christ's* Family, there to be fitted for the Office of Apostleship, to which they were afterwards called out: If any Thing, I say, is to be inferred with Relation to them, I think it is this, that it is necessary that Men be first instructed to be good *Christians*, before they be sent out upon the Office of the Ministry.

5. There is one Thing I will venture to infer further, from what I have said of this Sermon, compared with that in St. *Luke*; namely, that tho' I will not be positive in deciding whether they be one and the same Sermon once preached, that being no way needful to my Hypothesis, which either Way stands upon very firm Foundations: Yet thus much I will readily grant, that there is such an apparent Affinity between them, that I shall not venture to interpret any Doctrines in the one, in a Sense diverse or different from the other, (as I find a learned Interpreter(*q*), to whom I have been very much beholden in many Things, thinks we may do;) but shall think my self obliged to illustrate the one by the other, and to reconcile them as carefully as we would the Words of any honest Author speaking at several Times on the same Subject.

With these Postulata, which I think are very clear, I shall now set about the Explication, first of the *Beatitudes*, and then, if God spare me Life and Health, of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount: For which let us humbly implore his Aid and Assistance. May he bless what we have heard; and to him, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise*.

(*q*) Dr. *Whitby*.

A N

A P P E N D I X,

Wherein a late Opinion of a very Learned Person on Mat. vi. 25, &c. interpreting that Part of the Sermon on the Mount as peculiar to the Apostles, is considered.

HAVING in the two former Discourses proved, that by the Word *Disciples* in the first Verse of this Chapter, are meant *Christians* in general, and that the whole ensuing Sermon on the Mount is designed and addressed to the private *Christian*; and this being one of the main Foundations upon which my Interpretation of it is built: It is with no small Concern that I find this Doctrine opposed by a late most eminent Author, by whose excellent Labours the Church has been singularly obliged. But this being the Misfortune of great Men's Errors, that their Name giving them Authority, they become more plausible than the Errors of meaner Men; and this Opinion appearing to me to be of very dangerous Consequence, not only as superseding a considerable Part of the private *Christian's* Duty contained in the sixth Chapter of *St. Matthew*, but as opening a Gap for him to creep out of the whole Sermon on the Mount, as *not being intended* (if that Opinion prevails) *for a general and standing Rule to*
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all Christians: I beg Pardon of all the Friends of that most deserving Author, while I shew that he was mistaken in his Opinion of those Texts; and I hope I have some Reason to believe he himself was sensible of it, and in a posterior Work gave a much sounder Interpretation of them; as I shall shew in the End of this Dispute. And therefore I wish they who had the Care of his Papers, and printed his posthumous Works, had thought fit to suppress this new Opinion, of which I come now to give an Account.

That great Author, in the Third Volume of his posthumous Works, Page 116. in his Sermons against Covetousness, has a very particular Interpretation of some Expressions in this Sermon on the Mount; for he makes them first to be very *extraordinary* Duties, such as he himself confesses would be unreasonable, if they were now enjoined to ordinary *Christians*: And then, for that very Reason, makes them peculiar to *the Apostles*. The Expressions he mentions, are, first, that of *Taking no Thought for our Life, what we shall eat; or what we shall drink, nor for the Body what we shall put on*, Mat. vi. 25. where he is of Opinion, that our Saviour forbids all Care, even about the Necessaries of Life, Meat, Drink, and Cloathing. The second Expression he mentions, is at Ver. 26, and 28. where we are commanded to *Behold the Fowls of the Air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet our heavenly Father feedeth them; and to consider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin*. In which Words he is of Opinion, that the Persons to whom these Precepts are given, are commanded to depend on the

Providence of God for Food and Raiment, and to use no more Industry for the obtaining them; than the Fowls of the Air do, or the Lillies of the Field; which he explains to be none at all. He confesses, as I said, that these Precepts would be very unreasonable, had our Saviour given them as standing and ordinary Rules to all Christians, as certainly they would, if understood in that Sense: But this Unreasonableness he solves thus, by opening, I think, a great Gap, and venting an odd and dangerous Opinion; namely, that this Discourse of our Saviour's was not intended for a general and standing Rule to all Christians, but only designed for his Disciples, (by whom he means the Apostles) to take them off from all Care about the Things of this Life, that they might attend upon his Person, and wholly give up themselves to that Work to which he had called them. Now if we enquire what it was that drove this great Man to this hard Shift, of giving up the Sermon on the Mount, (or at least this Part of it) as not intended for a general and standing Rule to all Christians; we shall find it there, that it was only that he apprehended it to be the Scope and Design of our Saviour's Discourse in that Place, to oblige his Disciples literally to follow the Pattern of the Fowls of the Air, and the Lillies of the Field, which are sufficiently provided for without any Care and Industry of theirs: But if there be no Necessity to put such a Sense on the Words, and if they will very well bear one much more commodious, without running us upon such a desperate Shift; then all this I hope will go for nothing, and the Precepts here, as well as those in all the other Parts of this Sermon

mon on the Mount, will be still a general and standing Rule to all *Christians*.

For opening the right Sense, I desire it may be observed, in the first Place, that these Expressions, *Behold the Fowls of the Air, and consider the Lillies of the Field*, are not new Precepts, but only Arguments to enforce the Precept going before, of *taking no Thought for our Life, what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, nor yet for our Body what we shall put on*. Let any one attentively consider the Text, this is the Precept, *μὴ μεριμνᾶτε*; it is but ill rendered (r) *Take no Thought*; it should be, *Be not anxious, or solicitous, or over-thoughtful*: And indeed all Commentators have hitherto interpreted it in this Sense. This Precept is immediately backed with several Reasons or Arguments to enforce it; as 1. (s) *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?* 2. The Example of *the Fowls of the Air* (t), which tho' they are not furnished with so good regular Helps as we Men (for they can neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns, all which we can do,) are yet provided for by God's Providence (u); in which we are much better than they, or we have the better of them. 3. The Unprofitableness of this Anxiety; (w) *Which of you by taking Thought can add one Cubit to his Stature?* 4. The Example of the (x) *Lillies*, which without either the Field-labour, or House-labour, (both which we are capable of) are yet so nobly cloathed. 5. (y) The small Worth of these Flowers which flourish to Day, and are burnt or distilled To-morrow; whereas

H 3

we

(r) Mat. vi. 25.

(s) Mat. vi. 25.

(t) Ver. 26.

(u) Ibid.

(w) Ibid.

(x) Ver. 27, 28.

(y) Ver. 30.

we are of greater Dignity. 6. That after all those Things (z) the *Gentiles* seek, who believe nothing of a Providence. 7. That God will provide, knowing that we want all these Things. 8. (a) That Life in all the Parts of it has so many Troubles, that we need not anticipate them; (b) from all which Arguments the same Conclusion against Anxiety is distinctly drawn by our Saviour in that Discourse, Ver. 31, and 34. *Therefore take no Thought, &c.* which shews they are but Arguments.

The Text being thus opened, from whence it appears that this of *Beholding the Fowls of the Air*, as to our Eating and Drinking; and *Considering the Lillies of the Field*, as to Raiment; are only Motives and Reasons to back the Precept against Anxiety: I desire, *Secondly*, it may be further observed, almost of all these Arguments, that they are Arguments *à fortiori*, concluding not barely from a Parity of Reason, but that there is much more Reason that we should be clear of Anxiety, than the Things mentioned; and so generally either in the Argument, or the Conclusion, the Reasoning is plainly gathered *à fortiori*. *Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment? Are ye not much better than they? Or have ye not much the better of them? They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns;* and therefore not comparable to you who can do all this. Now here then is a very easy Sense of the Words, as if our Saviour had said, What Reason have ye to be anxious and solicitous, or distrustful of Providence? Other Creatures, not so well able regularly to provide for themselves,
are

(z) Ver. 32.

(a) Ibid.

(b) Ver. 34.

are yet taken Care of without Anxiety, and live merry chearful Lives, *as the Birds and Fowls of the Air, which can neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into Barns, all which ye can do*; why should ye be more distrustful and anxious than they? Here, I say, is a very commodious Sense of these Words, without being driven to such Extremity.

But lest the deserved Authority of this great and learned Man should carry it for his Exposition, I will, over and above the suggesting the right Sense, briefly vindicate this Text from this new Interpretation, by shewing several Defects in it, from which it will plainly appear that there is no Manner of Ground for it, and consequently that our Assertion holds good, that all the Duties of this Sermon are enjoined to all *Christians*, and none of them limited to Apostles.

1. Then, that the Duty here enjoined, *μὴ μεριμνᾶτε τῇ Ψυχῇ ὑμῶν τὸ φάγητε καὶ τὸ πίνειτε*, which we render, *Take no Thought for your Life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink*, was not peculiar to the *Apostles*, is plain, from St. Paul's recommending it to private *Christians*, *Ph. iv. 6.* *Μὴ δὲν μεριμνᾶτε*, which we render, *Be careful for nothing*; and if for nothing, then certainly not for Food and Raiment, which was our Saviour's Precept. St. Peter doth the same, *1 Pet. v. 7.* *Casting all your Care upon him, for he careth for you*; the same Argument which our Saviour uses against the same *μέριμνα*, or *anxious Care* in this Place; *for your heavenly Father, says he, knoweth that ye have Need of all these Things*; and the same Thing which our Saviour condemns in the Parable of the Sower, *Mat. xiii. 22.* as a common

Vice incident to all Hearers. *He, says he, that received Seed among the Thorns, is he that beareth the Word; and the Care of this World, ἡ μέριμνα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, and the Deceitfulness of Riches choak the Word, and he becometh unfruitful.* In the *New Testament* Stile, this is an usual Description of *Covetousness*, and the inordinate Cares of the World; a Vice than which there is none more cautioned against by the sacred Writers, in the whole Catalogue of Vices.

2. Let it be considered, that in the Context, which is all a Dissuasive from Covetousness, beginning Chap. vi. 19. and continuing for sixteen Verses together, to the End of the Chapter; the other Precepts, both before and after, are all universal, belonging to all *Christians*; *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth; but lay up for your selves Treasures in Heaven: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these Things shall be added unto you, &c.* and are so interpreted even by this great Author himself. Now how improbable is it, that this of *taking no Thought* in the Middle of the same very Discourse, and addressed to the same Persons, must be limited to Apostles, more than the rest?

3. But further, if the immediate Connexion is observed, all Limitation is expressly excluded; for this Precept of *taking no Thought* is an Inference drawn from another general Observation relating to all Mankind, Ver. 24. *No Man can serve two Masters: For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* Is this said only to *Apostles*? It follows immediately, *Therefore I say unto you, take no Thought for your*
Life,

Life, &c. Now if this is a plain Consequence, from that other Doctrine, that *No Man can serve two Masters*, deduced by our Saviour himself with an *Ergo, Therefore I say unto you*; the Conclusion will hold as general as the Premises, and so extend to all Mankind.

4. Further, that this Doctrine belongs to all *Christians*, and not only to *Apostles*, is plain, from another Argument our Saviour uses Ver. 32. where, after repeating the very same Precept, of *taking no Thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be cloathed?* It follows, *For after all these Things do the Heathen or the Gentiles seek.* Now which is most probable, that the Antithesis to *the Heathen* here, are *Christians*, or only *Apostles*? And, indeed,

5. In general, it is a great Demonstration to me that our Saviour intended not this Duty to be limited to *Apostles*, but to be extended to all *Christians*; because of the many Arguments he makes Use of to press it, I observe there is not one taken from the apostolical Function, but from such Considerations as are equally binding either upon all *Mankind*, or at least upon all *Christians*. Such as these, *That the Life is more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment*; *That we are better than the Fowls*; *That by taking Thought we can't add one Cubit unto our Stature*; *That God will much more cloath us than the worthless Lillies which grow to Day, and to Morrow are cast into the Still or Furnace*; *That after all these earthly Things the Gentiles seek*; *That our heavenly Father knows that we have Need of all these Things*; *That if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all these Things shall be superadded*; And that the Future
will

will bring Cares and Troubles enough along with it, and the Present has enough already, and therefore they ought not to be anticipated.

6. I believe it will always be found, that whenever the Word μέριμνα, which signifies the Height of Care and Concern, is joined with any worldly Thing, it is taken for a Vice in whatever Persons it is found, and therefore is not to be forbid to *Apostles* only, but to all other Men: It is such a Vice, that our Saviour joins it with *Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, Luke xxi. 34. *Take Heed to yourselves, says he, lest at any Time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life.*

7. To think that all, even moderate and regular Care, was forbid to *Apostles*, is, *gratis dictum*, there is no Ground that I can see, in any Part of the *New Testament*, for such an Assertion; for in that first Commission of theirs, which looks most like it, *Mat. x. 9.* tho' they were not to provide *two Coats*, (that is, Change of Raiment,) nor more than one Pair of Shoes, and one Staff, and were promised that the Gospel-Labourer should find Meat; yet some moderate Care it would require to provide these few Necessaries. And afterwards we find, that where People were not careful to supply them, (c) some of them supplied both their own and their Fellow-Travellers Necessities out of their own Industry and handy Labour.

8. Whereas our learned Author fixes the Comparison taken from the *Fowls of the Air* in this Point, that *they are sufficiently provided for, without any Care and Industry of theirs*, which has indeed led him into this New Opinion; I desire it may

(c) Acts xx. 34.

may be considered whether the Simile is not wrong placed: For *the Birds and Fowls of the Air*, tho' they are good Examples of a light and merry Heart, and consequently good Patterns of a Freedom from Anxiety, for which End they are here introduced, and so much the more proper Patterns of it, because they are not furnished with such Forecast and Ingeniousness as we Men are Masters of, to help to provide for their own Subsistence; for *they can neither sow nor reap, nor gather into Barns*, all which we can and may do: Which makes it an excellent Simile *à fortiori*: Yet it is a Mistake to think that they employ no Pains or Industry towards their own Subsistence; on the contrary, they are very nimble, diligent, and industrious, and take abundance of Pains to look out and gather up the proper Food, of Worms, Insects, wild Fruits, Seeds, and Grain, or whatever suits their Natures, both for themselves and their young: And therefore there is not any Reason from this Similitude to condemn lawful Care and Providence in any Men, tho' there is to condemn Anxiety in all Men, as well as *Apostles*.

I have said enough, I think, to confute this new Notion, that the Duty enjoined against *taking Thought*, is to be limited to the *Twelve chosen Disciples*; and therefore, for all this Objection, with Reverence to that great Name which has deserved so well of the Church, we may conclude, that all the Duties recommended in this Sermon, are *Christian Duties* in general, and not any of them limited to *Apostles*.

And indeed, tho' this great Author argues this his Opinion at large, I am apt to think he was of another Mind before his Death; for in a poster-
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rior Volume (whether the Discourse was of a prior or posterior Composition, I know not,) I find he gives a much sounder Sense of the Texts, concerning which we have been disputing. It is Vol. 7. pag. 44. where, after quoting the same Texts, *Mat. vi. Behold the Fowls of the Air, &c.* on another Account, he has this judicious Remark, which I will set down in his own Words: “ *Our Saviour useth these Arguments, says he, to his Disciples, to convince them of the Providence of God towards them, As MEN, and of a more excellent Nature than other Creatures.*” And if this be spoke to them As MEN, it is to be understood in a Sense applicable to all Men, and not to be limited to *Apostles*, which is the very Thing I am contending for.

S E R M O N IV.

M A T. V. 3.

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

HAVING in my former Discourses, from the first two Verses of this Chapter, observed that this Sermon on the Mount was designed for all *Christians* in general, and that it aims at the undeceiving Men in the carnal and worldly Notions and Expectations they had of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and at the rectifying the bad Dispositions of Mind they were under, occasioned by those carnal Notions and Expectations; this, if we carry it along with us in our Minds and Memories, will serve as a *Key* to open and unlock the Meaning of many Expressions and Passages in the Sermon it self; particularly this *first* that I have now read, which has strangely exercised the Conjectures of Interpreters; *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:* Which I understand, as if he had said, “ Ye are now full of
“ Expectations that the *Messiah* is about to enter
“ upon his Kingdom, and so he is; the Mosaical
“ State is now near an End, and the Evangelical
“ State, or the *Messiah’s* Kingdom, is at Hand:
“ But

“ But I must tell you freely, ye are in a very bad
 “ Disposition of Heart and Mind for it; and
 “ therefore to prepare you for that Kingdom of
 “ *the Messiah*, I will acquaint you who are the
 “ happy Persons that shall be admitted into it;
 “ for they are quite another Sort of Men than ye
 “ think, or are aware of. First, ye fancy that
 “ there is a vast deal of Wealth, Power, and
 “ worldly Grandeur, to be acquired under *the*
 “ *Messiah*; and accordingly your Hearts are full
 “ of the most covetous and ambitious Expecta-
 “ tions that Men can have; for ye expect no less
 “ than to share the Wealth and Government of
 “ the World among you; and that is what ye are
 “ now in your Hearts eagerly grasping after:
 “ But ye are extremely mistaken; the happy
 “ Persons who shall be admitted into the King-
 “ dom of *the Messiah*, must be of a quite con-
 “ trary Temper and Disposition; for as that
 “ Kingdom will not be of this World, so the
 “ Hearts and Minds of the Subjects of it must
 “ be disengaged from the World, and set on Hea-
 “ ven; for they, and none but they, are fit for
 “ that heavenly State and Kingdom.” This I
 take to be the true Meaning and Importance of
 the Words. But for the further clearing of it,
 and impressing a Sense of it upon our Spirits, I
 shall in them distinctly consider these three
 Things.

I. Who are meant here by the happy Persons called *The Poor in Spirit*.

II. What by *The Kingdom of Heaven*.

III. How the Kingdom of Heaven is *Theirs*; or what a necessary Preparation and Disposition
this

this *Poverty in Spirit* is, both for the Evangelical and the Heavenly State.

I. We are to consider who are meant here by those happy Persons called *The Poor in Spirit*; *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*. I think I have just now given the plain and natural Account of this in my Paraphrase of the Words, when I told you that by the *Poor in Spirit*, I understand them whose Hearts and Minds are disengaged from the World, and set on Heaven. This is the true Spirit of Poverty, which was so much wanting both in their Notions of, and in their Affections and Dispositions towards the *Messiah's* Kingdom. This *Spirit of Poverty*, as I take it, stands in Opposition both to a Spirit of Covetousness, and to a Spirit of Ambition; and so, if rightly understood, will in some Sense reconcile the two different Interpretations of *Poverty* and *Humility*, which Expositors have given of the *Poor in Spirit*, in this Text. For a great many Interpreters, both ancient and modern, by *The Poor in Spirit*, teach us to understand *the Humble*; but I could never find that the original Word properly signified *humble*: They quote, indeed, a Passage of *Isa.* lxvi. 2. where, as they think, *Poor* and *Humble* are joined together. *To this Man will I look (saith the Lord) even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* From which Passage they might as well prove that it signifies *penitent*, as *humble*. I confess I could never rest satisfied in that Interpretation, or find out how these Words *Poor in Spirit* signified *humble* in their principal Sense, tho' by Consequence they will imply the same Thing, as I shall presently shew,
after

after I have cleared up my Reasons for making the other the principal and literal Sense of the Words; which, in short, are these two: 1. The original Word Πτωχός, which we render *Poor*, is always so rendered throughout the whole *New Testament*, and never once *Humble*; and every one who understands the *Greek Language*, knows that *Poor* is the true proper Signification of that Word: Nor can I see any Reason to change the *proper* into a *metaphorical* Signification in this Place. 2. St. *Luke*, who repeats the Substance of this Sermon, and begins with the same Beatitude, *Luke* vi. 20. instead of saying *Poor in Spirit*, (which is the Expression upon which this Interpretation of *Humility* is built,) hath only the Word *Poor*; *Blessed be ye Poor*: And not only so, but after he has done with his Beatitudes, he reckons up several *Woes*, as opposite to the several *Beatitudes* he had mentioned: And the first *Woe* set opposite to the first *Beatitude*, is, *Woe unto you that are rich*; which to me seems to put the Thing beyond Dispute, and to evince that the Word, both here and in St. *Luke*, is to be taken in the plain and ordinary Sense, and is not by any Metaphor to be drawn to another Signification, as if it meant *the Humble*, or indeed any Thing else but the *Poor*, or such as have not their Portion in this Life.

But how then? Are all poor People happy, and all rich Men miserable? Is the Kingdom of Heaven bestowed on Men, or denied to them on account of some Difference of their outward State and Condition, without any Consideration of the inward Temper of their Minds, and Disposition of their Hearts and Souls? And so for
ob-

obtaining a Share in the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, is there nothing requisite, as to this Beatitude, but that we abandon Wealth and Riches, and take upon us a voluntary Poverty, making ourselves destitute of the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life. For answering this Objection, as I have made use of *St. Luke* for clearing the Meaning of *St. Matthew*, against such as would altogether exclude Poverty from the Blessing here pronounced; so I must again make use of *St. Matthew* for clearing this Doubt, which arises chiefly from *St. Luke's* more compendious Relation of this Part of our Saviour's Discourse. That we may know, then, that the *Blessing* doth not belong to all that are *outwardly poor*, nor the Imprecation to all that are *outwardly rich*; *St. Matthew* here says, *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit*; that is, Blessed are they who have withdrawn *their Minds, Hearts, and Affections*, from this World, and have them set on Heaven: So that if they are outwardly poor, they are contented; and if outwardly rich, they set not their Hearts upon their Riches, but are humble and modest, and diligent Seekers of God, and bestow their Wealth freely for the Services of Piety, Charity, Necessity, Hospitality, Conveniency, or whatsoever Occasions do offer for the Service of God or our Neighbour; as freely, indeed, as if it had no Place or Room in their Hearts at all. This is no constrained, but a very natural Sense, that they who do not treasure up the World in their Hearts, or set not their Hearts on the World, should be *The Poor in Spirit*; for they neither admire nor seek after great Things in this World; and if it is their Fortune to possess a great Estate, by their

whole Conduct and Behaviour they shew that their Heart is not set upon it. These are *the Poor in Spirit*, whatever be their outward State and Condition in this World. So that the Blessing here pronounced, and the contrary Woe implied, belongs to no Man considered only as in an high or low, rich or poor outward Condition in the World; but both to the one and t'other, according as their Hearts and Spirits do cleave to worldly Things, or are weaned from them. All that are poor in Purse, are not poor in Spirit; (a) for many of *them* do inwardly *enlarge their Desire as Hell*, and are full of covetous and ambitious Aims and Projects, and their Hearts cleave as much to the World, as if their chief Felicity consisted in the Possession of it: So, on the other hand, it is possible for a Man to enjoy a plentiful Portion of the World, and to be rich in his outward State and Condition, and yet to set his Heart so little on these Things, and to have his Soul so weaned from them, that he may be truly said to be *Poor in Spirit*, tho' he is outwardly rich, and so to have a Right and Title to the Blessing here pronounced.

So much for the Description of *the Poor in Spirit*; from which we may see, tho' it is not properly *Humility*, but a *Spirit of Poverty*, which is here directly meant, yet *Humility* will likewise fall in with this Description, at least no Man can be possessed of this Spirit of Poverty, but at the same time he must be possessed of *Humility*. For as Poverty in Spirit denotes an Heart delivered from the inordinate Love of Riches, the same blessed Temper, wherever it is, cuts off the

Sinews

(a) Hab. ii. 5.

Sinews of Pride, at least that sort of Purse-Pride which feeds on those outward Things that the covetous Mind seeks after. For let us put the Case in a Man outwardly poor, or outwardly rich, which you please, provided he be *Poor in Spirit*, as we have described; and we shall find still a great deal of Humility necessarily annexed to this Virtue: If the Person is outwardly poor, this Poverty in Spirit making him contented with his Fortune and Circumstances, cuts off all eager Desires of climbing to satisfy *Ambition*, as well as of scraping to satisfy *Covetousness*. So that a Spirit of *Humility*, and a Spirit of *Poverty*, in such a Man, go Hand in Hand together. Again, if the Person is outwardly rich, this Poverty in Spirit keeping him from setting his Heart on his Riches, doth by that very Thing cure him of that Pride and Vanity which commonly attends Wealth and Greatness, and likewise of that supercilious Contempt of, and looking down upon his poor Neighbours, which is so incident to un-sanctified Wealth. His Heart being weaned from his Wealth, he has no more left to elevate him from the Consideration of his Fortune, than if he had it not; and consequently he is as modest and humble, as affable and courteous, as sensible of the Vanity of the World, and the Uncertainty of Riches, in short, as free from Pride, as the poorest Man living. Thus, as I said before, by the right Notion of this Spirit of Poverty, the two different Opinions, concerning the Meaning of this *Beatitude*, may easily be reconciled, namely, that which places it in *Humility*, and that which places it in a *Spirit of Poverty*, or an Heart weaned from the World; tho' this last seems to

me much more agreeable to the proper and literal Notion of the Words, and therefore I insist most upon it.

II. I proceed next to what I proposed to consider in the *Second* Place, namely, what is to be meant here by *the Kingdom of Heaven*. In general, the most common Notion of *the Kingdom of God*, or *Kingdom of Heaven*, which are both one in the *New Testament*, is the spiritual *Kingdom* of the *Messiah*, or that evangelical State and Government of the Church, which the *Messiah* was to set up, with all the Benefits and Privileges of Grace and Glory annexed to it, which shall be bestowed on them, who by Faith in him become true Members of this Kingdom, and are governed by his Laws. And therefore the Meaning of the Words in this Place, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, I understand, as if our Lord had said, They are the fittest Persons to be admitted Members of *Christ's Church* militant on Earth, and of his Church triumphant in Heaven. This is the general Notion of the *Kingdom of God*, or *the Kingdom of Heaven*, in the *New Testament*; tho', according to the various Coherence and Connexion of the Words, by that Expression is sometimes denoted the Admittance of *Christians* into the Church, and sometimes their Consummation in Glory, and sometimes both; as, I believe, in this Place.

III. The third and last Thing I proposed to consider, is, How this Kingdom of Heaven is *Theirs*, or what a necessary Preparation and Disposition this *Poverty in Spirit* is for the evangelical State here, and eternal Happiness hereafter.

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In order to this, there are two Things I think to offer to your Consideration.

1. To shew that it was so in Fact, that the *Christian Church*, who were the Members or Subjects of this Kingdom, was made up of such Persons whose Hearts and Minds were most disengaged from the World.

2. To shew, from the Inconsistency of the worldly Spirit, and the Spirit of the Gospel, that none but *The Poor in Spirit* are capable of either the Kingdom of Grace here, or the Kingdom of Glory hereafter.

1. That it was so in Fact, that the *Christian Church* was made up of such Persons whose Hearts and Minds were most disengaged from the World. *Hearken, my beloved Brethren*, saith St. James ii. 5. *Hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* And our Lord himself observes to *John Baptist's Disciples*, Luke vii. 22. that it was *the Poor who were evangelized*; not only *had the Gospel preached to them*, as we render the Word; but were duly affected, and wrought upon, and brought over by the preaching of the Gospel (*b*). Thus the great Men make their boast, John vii. 48. *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? But this People which knoweth not the Law, are cursed.* And St. Paul says, very appositely to this Purpose, 1 Cor. i. 26. *For ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak Things*

(b) Πτωχοὶ ἐυαγγελίζονται.

Things of the World to confound the Things that are mighty; and base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and Things which are not, to bring to nought Things that are. The People that stood most out against our Saviour and his Doctrine, were the great and rich Men, who were most eagerly bent upon the World. (c) *They went away after their Farms and their Merchandise*, as it is in the Parable, and would not mind the Gospel Invitation; nay, of those who were *Christ's Disciples*, several forsook him, when they found it was not an earthly, but an heavenly Kingdom, to which he invited them. And particularly we have the History of one young Man, *Mat. xix. 22.* who chose rather to leave *Christ* than his Possessions, since he could not keep both. And indeed this is the true Account why he was rejected by the *Jewish Church*, because he appear'd not in that Wealth and worldly Grandeur they expected. How little there was of this worldly Spirit among the first *Christians*, we may guess, not only from their (d) *Taking cheerfully the spoiling of their Goods* at the Hands of their Enemies, but from their so generously selling their Estates, and (e) *Laying down the Price at the Apostles Feet*, that Distribution might be made to every one of their *Christian Brethren*, according as they had Need. And I do not remember any one that crept in among them possessed with a worldly Spirit, except *Judas*, who sold his Master for Money; and *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, who, as I conjecture, joined themselves to the *Christian Church*, only or chiefly that they might be entitled to a liberal Provision

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(c) *Mat. xxii. 5.*(d) *Heb. x. 34.*(e) *Acts iv. 34.*

out of the common Stock, tho' they had a secret Reserve of their own Estate, which they thought to have enjoyed unknown to the rest. And how fatal this Spirit proved to these three, ye know from the History. It is true, in the Beginning this worldly Spirit was very much among them all, as appears from their frequent Disputes who should be greatest in *Christ's* Kingdom; but it was always corrected by our Lord, and at last perfectly cured, by his Ascension into Heaven, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. So much for the Fact, that the *Christian* Church was made up of such Members whose Hearts and Minds were disengaged from the World.

2. In the next Place I am to shew, from the Inconsistency of the worldly Spirit, and the Spirit of the Gospel, that none but *the Poor in Spirit* were capable of either the Kingdom of Grace here, or the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. Our Saviour has told us how impossible it is to (*f*) *serve God and Mammon*; and if he had not said it, the Inconsistency of these two Services would quickly demonstrate the same Thing: For, besides the many *Christian* Precepts concerning the Love of God with all our Hearts, Self-denial, Contentment, Heavenly-mindedness, rendering to all their Dues, brotherly Love, Charity even to Enemies, bearing the Cross, and many other most directly contrary to this worldly Spirit, which hold the principal Place in the *Christian* Morals; I do not see how the very Profession of *Christianity* could in those blessed Days have been complied with, without laying aside that worldly Spirit: For the Profession of *Christianity*, as I

observed just now, exposed them, on the one hand, to the spoiling of their Goods, which was very often their Lot; and if they could not have complied with it, they must have quit the Profession, as well as the Practice of *Christianity*, and, with the young Man in the Gospel, (g) *have gone away sorrowful*; or if Persecution had spared them at the Hands of their Enemies, they could not have come off so well at the Hands of their Friends, very large Charities being expected from them, at a Time when their Brethren sold all, and brought all in to the common Stock. (b) At such a Time, if the *Christian* Professors in this Life only had had Hope, of all Men certainly they had been the most miserable (i). So that there was a very near Connexion between this Spirit of Poverty, and the Kingdom of both Grace and Glory. To have pleased these worldly-spirited Men, there must have been an *earthly*, instead of an *heavenly Kingdom*, and a conquering, instead of a suffering Saviour, and a carnal *Mahometan*, instead of the *Christian* Religion. This, then, our Saviour might well lay down as a first Fundamental of *Christian* Morals, (as great a Paradox as it was to them who were filled with worldly Expectations from the *Messiah*,) that *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*.

Thus now I have explained this first *Beatitude*. It remains only that we make Application of what hath been said, every one of us to his own Heart and Life; for it concerns us no less than our Share and Interest in *Christ's* Kingdom of Grace here, and Glory hereafter, to make sure of

(g) Mat. xix. 22.

(b) Acts iv. 34.

(i) 1 Cor. xv. 19.

of this first Character of a good *Christian*; namely, that our Hearts be disentangled from the Love, Cares, Fears, Troubles, Anxieties, and Concerns of the World, and set on Heaven. And to help you to a short Trial of your Hearts in this Particular, whether they are so disengaged from the World or not, I shall very briefly propose to you some certain Marks and Evidences whereby ye may know your Hearts in this Matter, and so have done.

1. *First*, then, Assure your selves ye have not yet learned this *Poverty in Spirit*, if ye love the World so well (*k*) as to allow yourselves to acquire it by any unjust, dishonest, or sinful Means; such as Pilfering, Stealing, Lying, Equivocating, Fraud, false Insinuations, Oppression, Exaction, Bribery, false Accounts, false Weights and Measures, deceitful making or packing of Commodities, slight or untrue Working, or any other Way that is either unjust, base, or dishonourable in itself, or injurious to our Neighbour.

2. Ye are far from this *Christian Spirit of Poverty*, (*l*) if ye are of a narrow, pinching, penurious Temper, and love the World so well as to grudge to bestow upon yourselves, and Wives, and Children, and Servants, and Friends, the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life, suitable to your Duty, Estate, and Circumstances.

3. Ye are far from this *Poverty in Spirit*, and Disengagement from the World, if ye suffer your (*m*) Minds to be so much cumbered and diverted with the Cares of this Life, or with Anxiety for future Wants, as to neglect your Devotions to God, or to let your worldly Cares and Business

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(*k*) Psal. cxix. 36.

(*l*) Heb. xiii. 5.

(*m*) Mat. xiii. 22.

eat out the Care of your Souls, and of a better Life.

4. Ye are not so disengaged from (*n*) the Love of the World as this *Poverty in Spirit* requires, if ye are not willing chearfully and readily, according to your Ability and the Opportunities God puts in your Hands, to do Good in Works of Piety and Charity to your Brethren and Neighbours in Distress, and in promoting the publick Good of the World, especially that Part of it where God has cast your Lot.

5. If we are thus inwardly disengaged from the World, (*o*) we shall have a patient and chearful Contentment and Satisfaction with our own Circumstances, be they ever so mean, without envying such as are greater and wealthier than ourselves.

6. We are far from this *Poverty in Spirit*, if we are strongly resolved, and eagerly bent to be rich; if in our Hearts we grasp the World, and earnestly wish and desire it. *They that will be rich, saith St. Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 9. fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.*

7. We are Strangers to this *Poverty in Spirit*, if we are not contented to gain leisurely and moderately, but make unreasonable Haste to be rich; for that puts a Man upon many sinister Courses to come at it. *He that maketh Haste to be rich, shall not be innocent, saith Solomon; that is, by a common μέλις, shall be a great Knave, Prov. xxviii. 20.*

8. We

(*n*) John iii. 17.

(*o*) Phil. iv. 11.

8. We are far from this *Poverty in Spirit*, if we look upon our Wealth and Riches with too much Complacency and Delight, especially if we place our Trust or Confidence in them, like the rich Man, in the Gospel (*p*), who delighted himself, and trusted in his full Barns, and not in God.

9. It is a Sign that we are far from this *Poverty in Spirit*, when, upon any great Loss, or even Poverty itself coming upon us, we are fretful, peevish, and discontented; for if the World had not too deep Root in our Hearts, we could easily part with it at God's Pleasure: We could say, with holy Job, (*q*) *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord*: Or, with St. Paul, *I have learned in whatsoever State I am, therewith to be content; I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: Every where, and in all Things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer Need*, Phil. iv. 11, 12.

10. It is a Sign we are Strangers to this *Poverty in Spirit*, if we set no Bounds to our worldly Purchases, but go on, if we are ever so rich, scraping, and gathering, and heaping up, *in infinitum*. Whereas it is certainly the Duty of rich Men to know when they have enough, and to put a Stop to their worldly Acquisitions, and to be liberal in good Works with the Overplus. This I take to be St. Paul's Meaning, 1 Tim. vi. 18. where he gives a particular Charge *to the Rich in this World, to do Good, to be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time*

(*p*) Luke xii. 19.

(*q*) Job i. 21.

11. *Lastly*, It is a Sign that we are great Strangers to this *Poverty in Spirit*, if we are not ready to part with our worldly Estates, rather than betray our (r) Religion and Conscience, by keeping them on sinful Terms. It was often the Lot of the primitive *Christians*, that they were obliged either to lose all, or abandon their *Christian* Profession; and if ever it should be our Lot, as it sometimes is in this World, that we must either quit a Place of Profit, or comply with sinful Terms in keeping it, either lose our Estate, or change our Religion, and quit a good Conscience; if we are truly disengaged from the World, we shall count nothing dear to us, so that we may win *Christ*: But shall take up our Cross, and chearfully follow him, not only to Poverty, but to Bonds and Imprisonment, and to Death itself. (s) *Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, and despised the Shame, and is now set down on the Right Hand of the Throne of God.*

Ye may think, perhaps, some of these are hard Lessons, and not well suited to our degenerate Times of *Christianity*; I can't help that: It is true, they would be very hard, if we were thus to part with the World, without having some better Thing in Exchange. But the Promise in my Text, of *the Kingdom of Heaven*, is more than sufficient to make up our Loss of the World. God give us Grace to believe this Promise, and in the mean Time to live as Heirs of this heavenly Kingdom;

(r) Luke xviii. 23.

(s) Heb. xii. 2.

Kingdom; of which, as we are admitted Members by Profession, so God grant that in due Time we may be likewise Partakers of the Glory and eternal Felicities of it, through the Mediation of our Blessed Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.
To whom, &c.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

MAT. V. 4.

Blessed are they that mourn: For they shall be comforted.

FOR finding out the Meaning of this Beatitude, which sounds harsh to Flesh and Blood, it will be necessary to remember the general Observation I made from the Occasion, Scope, and Purport of this Sermon on the Mount; namely, that our Lord is here undeceiving the People and his Disciples, as to the wrong Notions they had of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and correcting the bad Dispositions and Preparations of their Minds for it: All which wrong Notions and Dispositions flowed from this one *πρώτον Ψεῦδος*, or fundamental Error, that they expected the Kingdom of the *Messiah* would be a great worldly Kingdom, flowing in Wealth, Honour, and carnal Pleasure; that it would gratify their Lusts and Passions to the utmost, and give them an absolute Victory and Conquest over all their own and their Country's Enemies. In this Sermon our Saviour advances such Maxims as are the most directly contrary to these their erroneous Opinions, and the best levelled utterly to extirpate and root out of his Hearers Minds these bad Dispositions of Heart, and Practices of Life, which

which did so incapacitate them for his spiritual Kingdom and Service. We learned from the last Beatitude, how he pronounced a Blessing on them who had their Hearts and Minds disengaged from the Wealth and Grandeur of the World; he comes now to undeceive them as to another of their Expectations from the same Kingdom of the *Messiah*, in the worldly Notion they had of it, namely, as to all sorts of carnal Mirth and high living; for, no doubt, as they expected a great deal of Wealth and Honour, they expected likewise all manner of Gratifications of their Luxury, stately Houses, Furniture, and Equipage, plentiful Tables, Mirth, Musick, and Drinking; they proposed to themselves a Life of the greatest Jollity, Profuseness, and Merriment, and hated the Thoughts of Seriousness and Penitence. This is the evil Disposition of their Minds our Saviour seems to me to level at in this Beatitude; *Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted*; q. d. Ye are much mistaken if ye think the Kingdom of the *Messiah* will flow in carnal Mirth and Luxury, or that the Members of it shall know nothing of Trouble; for both their outward Circumstances shall be full of Crosses, enough to curb all that wanton Mirth and Pleasure ye expect; and the Sense of their own and the World's Sins, and the Fear of God's Judgments, shall make such an Impression upon their Spirits, that they shall seriously mourn, as becomes true Penitents. But let not this discourage you; for tho' they should be depriv'd of these sensual Pleasures, there is another much more valuable Sort, which shall be plentifully bestowed upon them, namely, the inward Com-

forts of the Spirit, and the eternal Comforts in Heaven. This I take to be the true Purport, and right Paraphrase of the Words. But for our better apprehending the Meaning of them, and for begetting in us a deeper Sense of the principal Truths contained in them, I shall do these three Things.

I. I will consider more particularly what is meant by them *that mourn*.

II. I will shew how blessed they are from *the Comforts* they shall reap both here and hereafter.

III. I shall draw some Inferences from the whole, for our Edification.

I. We are to consider more particularly what is meant by them *that mourn*. Where, first, because the Virtue here described is very easily misconstrued, there being some Vices and Diseases too, and perhaps some other Virtues, which are apt to be taken for it, it will not be amiss to consider first, *negatively*, some Things in which it doth not consist, before we consider *positively*, wherein it doth.

1. By the *Mourners* here, we are not to mean all Persons in Trouble and Affliction; for tho' the foretelling of the Cross was a Thing very proper for our Saviour, and a Thing which he did upon divers other Occasions, I do not take that to be the Business here: For all these Beatitudes are so many Virtues, in which the chief Characters of a good *Christian*, or Member of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, are laid down, and proper Promises of Rewards are annexed. Now it is not every one that meets with Afflictions and Troubles that
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acts the virtuous Part, or is entitled to the Comfort here promised; but then, perhaps, ye may think the Persons here described are such as fall into Trouble on account of their Fidelity and Constancy to the *Christian* Religion and Practice. I should think so too, if I did not believe *them* to be described in the last Beatitude, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake*; and because I am persuaded there is no Tautology in these Beatitudes, it must needs, I think, be something else that is intended in this Beatitude. Nor

2. Is it the uneasy melancholy Person that is here meant, never satisfied with his Circumstances, but always murmuring and discontented. These Persons are not so much humbled by Affliction, as angry and uneasy on that Account; such a one thinks himself not so well used as he deserves. Under Affliction the true Mourner receives Chastisement, and stands corrected by it; but the Murmurer, as it were, strikes again, and scorns to be amended: And therefore it is not the bare being afflicted which entitles a Man to this Beatitude, except in so far as his Affliction has good Effects upon him, in working in him Humility and a godly Sorrow for Sin, which worketh Repentance to Salvation. From hence we may learn how far natural Grief and Sorrow is an Ingredient in this Mourning; for it is according to the good or bad Use we make of it. If it makes us serious and considerate, if it brings us to a Sense of our Sins, and sets us, in good earnest, on Methods of Amendment, then it belongs to this Mourning or godly Sorrow in my Text; but if it produces only Peevishness, Impatience,

and Discontent; if it only makes us smart, without any other good Fruits of it; if we are either insensible, or not sensible the right Way; if we are either hardened, or proud, impatient and impenitent; we are none of the right *Mourners* in my Text.

I have shewed you some Things wherein *this Mourning* doth not consist, tho' they look like it; I proceed next to consider more positively wherein it lies. In general, I take it to be something that guards us against that frolicksome, jovial, carnal Mirth, of which they expected a large Share in the Kingdom of the *Messiah*. And with this View it will take in several very considerable *Christian* Virtues, as to which their wrong Notions of *Christ's Kingdom* gave their Minds a very bad Disposition and Temper. I shall name the chief of them.

1. I begin with *Sobriety* and *Temperance*, as being directly contrary to that vain and frolicksome Mirth which is designed to be condemned by the *Mourning* in my Text. Luxury and high Living undoubtedly was one main Thing they proposed to themselves in *Christ's Kingdom*, from the carnal Notion they had of it. Now our Saviour here not only aims at the undeceiving them as to this Part of their Expectation, but likewise at the fortifying them with all those Graces and Virtues which were proper for that afflicted State, which he knew was to be their Lot in his Service. For if they were not only to be cut off from their luxurious, libertine Expectations, but to be reduced to a Life of greater Hardship and Penury than most other poor Men in this World; if they were to be excommunicated, imprisoned, banished, put

to an uncertain wandering Life, without any certain Dwelling-place, exposed to much Hunger and Cold, and deprived of most of the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, so that it was a State of Affliction and Mourning they were to be reduced to; it was necessary that they should be armed with a Temper of Mind well fitted and prepared for that afflicted State: And that Temper of Mind may properly be called *Mourning*, or *Penitence*, which required many Virtues to prepare them for it, and to support them under it; particularly this of *Sobriety* and *Temperance*, is an excellent Disposition of Mind for both these: For he who is endowed with these Virtues, is prepared for the hardest Fare, and the meanest Entertainment he can meet with in this World. He proposes to himself but bare Food and Raiment, and is totally weaned in his Heart from those Pleasures which luxurious Men propose to themselves in plentiful Tables, and Excess or Variety of strong Drink, or in stately Houses, and sumptuous Furniture, in large Possessions, and all other Conveniencies and Delights of the Sons of Men. Not that it is unlawful to possess or enjoy any of these Things, so that we keep within the Bounds of Moderation and Sobriety; no more than under the first Beatitude we found it unlawful to possess Wealth, so that we do not set our Hearts upon it; so it is not unlawful to enjoy lawful Pleasures, provided we set not our Hearts upon them, so as to forget the more serious Business we have to mind in the World, which is Repentance and Amendment of Life. Now that Gluttony and Drunkenness, and all manner of Luxury, are inconsistent with this serious penitent Temper, and

with a Preparation for Crosses and Afflictions of all Sorts, will appear from the Consideration of the contrary Effects they usually have on Men's Spirits and Lives. For (1.) There is nothing more contrary to that Seriousness and Consideration, which is so necessary for laying the Foundation deep in Religion. The great Objects of Religion are Things so remote from our Senses, that it requires a great deal of sedate Thought to make us in any Degree sensible of them. The Idea of God is more to be gathered from the Excellency of his Works, and the Holiness of his Precepts, than from any innate Principles in our Minds, till they are excited by Reason and Argument. Now there is nothing a greater Enemy to Thought and Reflection, than that vain Mirth and Sottishness occasioned by Gluttony and Drunkenness. And (2.) If we have at any Time any serious Thoughts, any Remorses of Conscience, any Designs or Resolutions of Amendment of Life, there is nothing sooner quenches and extinguishes them, than that carnal Mirth occasioned by Gluttony and Drunkenness, and other Scenes of Luxury. (3.) There is nothing that more softens and enfeebles the Mind, and either exposes it more to be wrought upon by Temptation to Pleasure, or more easily moves it from its Constancy, in case of any Hardship to be undergone for either the Profession or Practice of Religion, than too great an Inclination to present Ease and Pleasure, and an Aversion from the Cross. (4.) As the Principles of the *Flesh* and *Spirit* are contrary to each other, the carnal Principle is exceedingly strengthened by Indulgence in Gluttony and Drunkenness, Idleness and Re-

creation,

creation, and such other Employments as are gratifying to the Flesh; and, on the other Hand, the spiritual Principle is not more strengthened by any Thing than by Sobriety and Temperance, and a Contempt of Pleasure, and a Courage and Constancy in enduring Hardships and Difficulties in the Way of our Duty. As Luxury effeminates a Soldier, and unfits him for the laborious Part of his Office, in which the Exercises of an hard Campaign harden him; so it is in the spiritual Warfare: Pleasure effeminates a Soldier of *Christ*, whereas a steady Preparation of Mind for bearing the Cross, hardens and confirms him in his Duty.

2. A *Second* Virtue this *Mourning* comprehends, is *Contrition* and *Penitence*; by which I understand not any transient Act of Sorrow, but such a deep Repentance as leaves lasting Impressions, and makes us put on the Habit of *Mourners*; I mean deep Consideration in our Thoughts, a Seriousness in our Speech, and a Gravity in our Garb, and Way of living; an abandoning of Idleness, Vanity, Frolicks, Intemperance, Luxury, indecent or excessive Mirth, Lasciviousness, and whatsoever is inconsistent with a grave, serious, and penitent Deportment, and the Exercise of Fasting and Mortification, as far as is consistent with Health, and answers the End of subduing Lust. Now there are many Things contribute towards the begetting and keeping up of this serious penitent Temper in good People. (1.) The Consideration of their past Sins. It is the continual Grief of their Heart, that they have proved unthankful and disobedient to Almighty God; and this Grief lasts, not only while their Sins and

Corruptions prevail, but even long after, by the Grace of God, they have got the Mastery of them. After they are ever so well advanced, and have made ever so good a Progress in Sanctification, they are always mindful what wicked Persons they have been, and are humbled to their dying Day on account of those very Sins which they have all Reason to believe God has pardoned, and they have long ago repented of. For it is a great Mistake to think that Repentance is only one Fit, as it were, of godly Sorrow and Mourning for Sin; it is an habitual Temper of the Mind, and Course of Life, and serves still to humble us for what is past, as well as to guard us against the like Sins and Follies for the future.

(2.) This contrite penitent Temper is kept up by a great Sense of unmortified Corruptions; for in this Life we have never such an absolute Conquest over our Lusts, but that they are ever and anon rebelling, and giving us a great deal of Uneasiness: They are like the Remnants of the accursed Nations which God left among the *Israelites*, to prove and try them. For if ever we remit our Watch, they are Snares and Traps unto us, and Scourges in our Sides, and Thorns in our Eyes. The best Man upon Earth has many a bitter Conflict with his Lusts and Corruptions, and doth not in every particular Combat come off successful, but is often foiled and overcome, tho' God gives him Grace to renew the Combat, and never to give out till he comes off victorious in the End. (3.) As unmortified Corruptions, so imperfect Graces occasion a great deal of penitential Sorrow to good Men: That Driness, and want of Appetite and Taste, which is incident to their

their Devotions; that Negligence, and want of Care and Zeal, which attends and clogs their best Services; that Aptness to be led away with Temptations; that spiritual Sleepiness and Drowsiness, which in the Parable of the Virgins seized the Wife as well as the Foolish; the many Hazards they run, and the little Comfort they find in these their negligent Courses, affords them great Matter for Grief and Mourning, while they pass through this wretched Life, this Valley of Tears; for so indeed the very best of it may be called, if compared with Heaven. (4.) The Sins of others contribute to this penitential Mourning. (a) *Rivers of Waters*, says the Psalmist, *run down mine Eyes, because they keep not thy Law*. And tho' all Mourners may not be of so melting a Temper, so as to be able to shed Tears in such abundance; yet their Grief and Mourning perhaps is not the less, as grieving not only for their own and other Men's Sins; but for their too great Insensibility and Hard-heartedness on account thereof: They have not those Rivers of Tears, but heartily wish they had them, and mourn that they have them not. They can say with the Prophet *Jeremiah*, (b) *My Bowels, my Bowels, I am pained at my very Heart*. And with the same Prophet elsewhere, (c) *O that my Head were Waters, and mine Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night*. (5.) As a Sense of Sins abounding occasions this Mourning, it is nourished by a Sense of God's Judgments, either threatened, or impending, or executed: For the Mourner described in my Text is not one of those hardened obdured Creatures that disregards and despises God's Judgments,

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(a) Psal. cxix. 136.

(b) Jer. iv. 19.

(c) Jer. ix. 1.

ments, and will not understand the Language and Meaning of his Rods: He is not like *Pharaoh*, who presently forgot and turned insensible, as soon as the Rod was removed from off his Back; but, like the Psalmist, he can truly say, *(d) My Flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy Judgments.*

3. The third and last Virtue I shall name, as comprehended under this godly Mourning, is a Dislike of the World, and a Longing for Heaven. For tho' a good Man thinks it his Duty (and accordingly practises it very carefully) to be content in every State of Life, yet all the while his Heart is in Heaven, that is his Home and Country, and he is but in a State of Pilgrimage here; and, accordingly, this present Life at best is insipid to him, in Comparison of that which is to come. This occasions a pious Mourning for our Lord's Absence, and *(e) a Desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.* And the very best of Saints, if they have ever so much Grace bestowed upon them, look upon it only as an *Earnest* of that immense Happiness which they hope for hereafter; and it serves only to sharpen their Appetite after it. *(f) O that I had Wings like a Dove! for then would I flee away and be at Rest;* says the devout Psalmist.

What has been said may suffice for the *First* Thing I proposed, namely, to shew what is meant by them that *Mourn*.

II. I proceed now to the *Second*, which is, to consider how blessed they are from the Comforts they shall reap both here and hereafter. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

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(d) Psal. cxix. 120.

(e) Phil. i. 23.

(f) Psal. lv. 6.

There are many Things that comfort these Mourners I have described: For this Mourning or penitential Sorrow is like Ground well prepared, ready manured and watered, fit to receive the Seeds, and to bring forth the Fruits of all *Christian* Virtues, which bring in a rich Harvest of Comfort and Felicity. For (1.) Tho' this penitential Sorrow is inconsistent with a Course of carnal Pleasure, and the Excess and Luxury attending a voluptuous Life; it is no way inconsistent with *spiritual Joy*, or *rejoicing in the Lord*, but fits and prepares the Mind so much the better for it. It is one of the Characters the Apostle St. Paul gives of himself and of his fellow *Christians*, that tho' externally they appeared sorrowful, yet they were possessed with a great inward Joy. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*, 2 Cor. vi. 10. To look only at the outward Troubles and Afflictions of good Men, (especially in those Days of Persecution,) one would have thought they had Load enough to break any Man's Back; but if at the same Time we could see the inward Consolations they are possessed of, we should be convinced they have an inward Spring of Joy, which all outward Calamities cannot exhaust or dry up. The same St. Paul tells us, that (g) *he took Pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses, for Christ's Sake*. And the Prophet *Habakkuk* comforts himself with this Consideration, *Hab. iii. 17.* that *although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd.*

Herd in the Stalls ; yet he would rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his Salvation. The greatest Flood of penitential Tears has an inexpressible deal of Comfort in it, infinitely beyond all the Pleasures of Sin. (2.) And if this penitential Sorrow itself is immediately joined to so great Refreshments of Comfort, what great Additions may we think are made to it from the many blessed Fruits and Consequences of it in the Heart and Life? To name a few of them; As this penitential Sorrow weans our Hearts from the World, it naturally begets in them a longing Desire after Heaven, and a Delight in God, which is infinitely comfortable, This again occasions a drawing near to him in Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation; Contemplation I mean both of his Nature and Attributes, and of his Works of Creation, Providence, Redemption and Grace, and especially the Contemplation of his Love in the Person of his dear Son *Christ Jesus*; all which are very comfortable Exercises. Further, this godly Sorrow is always attended with a great Vigilance against Temptations; for as the burnt Child dreads the Fire, whoever has felt the Smart of penitential Sorrow, remembers to watch, and to stand upon his Guard, particularly against those Sins whereby he was formerly ensnared. And this, as it affords great Satisfaction to the Mind at present, (for every Act of Care and Virtue treasures up proportionally as much Comfort and Joy,) so it guards against so much Grief and Sorrow, which are the infallible Consequences of repeated Sins. This Temper, too, both makes one very desirous of more solid Comforts than sinful Pleasures do afford, and doth likewise excellently

cellently prepare the Mind for those Comforts: As Hunger gives both a sharp Appetite after our Food, and makes it go down with a good Gusto and Relish; so penitential Sorrow both raises an Appetite after divine Comforts, and gives them a most pleasant Relish when they come. If there were no more but the Increase of Grace, whereby we are more and more enabled to subdue our Lusts and Corruptions, and to acquire more confirmed Habits of every *Christian* Grace and Virtue, the Comfort of this is unspeakable; for the Soul still acquires further Degrees of Liberty, Peace, Rest, and Joy, the further she advances in bringing forth these Fruits of Repentance: And all this is attended with a Train of the most delightful and satisfying Comforts, even in this Life, that can be imagined; such as a Peace of Conscience, a good Government of all the Faculties and Passions, a well-grounded Hope rising from that great Peace and Joy we have in believing, and an Acquiescence and Contentment of Mind in the happy Change of our State and Condition, which is so great and sweet, that it is like a Heaven upon Earth. (3.) If the Fruits of this Temper are so great in this Life, what will they be in Heaven? There are the only pure and unmixed Joys and Comforts, not allayed with the Crosses and Sins which are continually giving a Check to them here. At present we can have but very imperfect Notions of these heavenly Comforts; only, in general, we may assure ourselves they are both much purer in their Nature, and much more exalted in Degree, and infinitely more lasting and permanent, and that we shall be much better qualified for tasting and relishing them, than ever the
best

best Men are for relishing the most pure and heavenly Satisfactions and Comforts which are vouchsafed to them in their most happy Moments in this Life. I cannot but think that it must be the Joys of Heaven which are chiefly intended by this Promise in my Text, the other which I spoke of in this World being both very imperfect, and too frequently interrupted by the Sins and Temptations, and constant Troubles of this Life.

3. The third and last Thing I proposed, was to draw some Inferences from the Doctrine of this Beatitude, for our further Edification.

1. This Doctrine may serve to discover the great Folly of a great Part of Mankind; I mean not only those who give up themselves to such an intemperate way of living as to drown all serious Thoughts, and to smother all Remorse for the Errors of their Life past, and sincere Resolutions of Amendment for the Time to come; but all those likewise who place their Happiness in a great Plenty and Affluence of every Thing that may gratify their Luxury, and may make them swim in the Pleasures of this World. How many are there who bend all their Care and Study after great Estates, stately Houses, rich Furniture, plentiful Tables, and all other Things which may gratify their Luxury; and, in the mean time, are both Strangers to the Joys which rise from the Exercise of Virtue here, and to the Hopes of a blessed Immortality hereafter?

2. This Doctrine may shew us the Necessity of a mourning penitent Temper, that we should endeavour to be always deeply affected with a godly Sorrow in regard of our past Sins and Follies, and a holy Fear of falling into the like again. There

is nothing more inconsistent with this Temper, than the looking back on our Sins with Pleasure and Satisfaction, and acting them over again in our impure Imaginations, with repeated Approbation; nothing likewise is more contrary to this mourning Temper, than, instead of mortifying our Lusts and Corruptions by Fasting, Abstinence, and Sobriety, and avoiding all Occasions of Temptation to provoke and inflame them, by high eating and drinking, and running upon Temptations and other Inventions to prove our own Devils and Tempters.

3. If there is so much inward Comfort attending Repentance, which yet is the most smarting and painful Part of Religion; then this may convince us of the Sweetness and Easiness of *Christ's* Yoke, the hardest of whose Service is attended with so much inward Peace and Satisfaction: For Repentance is, like the Pangs and Throws of the new Birth, attended with a great deal of Struggling, Sorrow, and Uneasiness; but the more we go on in the Ways of Virtue, so much the more plentifully and solidly do we participate of that inward Joy and Contentment which is infinitely beyond the greatest Pleasures of Sin. Let us not then be discouraged at the first Difficulties in Religion, or raise up a bad Report upon it, as the evil Spies did upon the promised Land, saying, it was a *Land that devoured its Inhabitants*. For when we come to be better acquainted with it, we shall find the Giants were unreasonably multiplied, and that the Land is both a fruitful and a pleasant Land, and fully answers all the Pains we laid out in purchasing it.

To conclude, Let us resolve on a grave serious Temper of Mind, and watchful Course of Life. Let us walk humbly, temperately, warily and considerately, like Men who believe in good earnest that they have a great Stake to manage, and that according as they sow in this Life, they shall reap in the Life to come: We shall find that the Pleasures of a serious virtuous Life are not like the Pleasures of Sin, a little sweet at their first coming on, but bitter at their going off, and poisonous and unwholesome for ever; quite contrary, the longer we continue, and the greater Progress we make in the Ways of Repentance and new Life, the more inward Comfort, Joy and Peace, we shall treasure up for ourselves in this World, and in the World to come eternal Life and Felicity. For which blessed State God of his infinite Mercy prepare us all, through *Jesus Christ* our Saviour. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N VI.

MAT. V. 5.

Blessed are the Meek; for they shall inherit the Earth.

AS in the *first* Beatitude our Lord gave a Check to the covetous and ambitious, and in the *second* to the sensual and luxurious Inclinations of Men; so now here in the *third* he gives a Check to the proud and irascible Passions, which are as troublesome to a Man's self, and more troublesome to his Neighbours than any of the other. And in this likewise he meets with another of those bad Dispositions of Men's Minds, by reason of which they were so ill prepared for the *Messiah's* Kingdom. As if he had said, "Ye fancy there are great Conquests to be made, and mighty Battels to be fought by the *Messiah* and his Followers, and consequently that one main Qualification for his Kingdom is a great Fierceness in attacking and overcoming, and as great a Resentment in punishing all his Enemies: But I must undeceive you; it is not these carnal Weapons, nor this martial Courage or Prowess, which is wanted for the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, but a quite contrary Spirit and Temper;
" a Spi-

“ a Spirit of Meekness and Humility, which tho’
 “ ye may think a very bad Preparation for con-
 “ quering and possessing the World, yet it will
 “ really qualify you better for the quiet Enjoy-
 “ ment of such a Portion of it as this Kingdom
 “ of the *Messiah* requires, than the greatest mili-
 “ tary Skill, animated with the fiercest and most
 “ undaunted Passions.” From the Words I pro-
 pose these two Things.

I. To give you a Description of the Virtue of *Meekness*, here recommended.

II. To consider the Blessing annexed to the meek Persons, *That they shall inherit the Earth.*

I. *First*, I am to give a Description of the Virtue of *Meekness*, *Blessed are the Meek.* *Meekness* in general is a right Government of the Passion of Anger, and especially a bridling and restraining that headstrong Unruliness which is incident to it, that it stir not but at the Command of Reason, and that it go on just as far as Reason directs, and no further; and that it come off again at the same Command. So that to understand the Nature of this Virtue of *Meekness*, which is a right Government of Anger, we must know when and where, and how far Anger is to be made use of, which is certainly a very difficult Inquiry, and almost impossible to be rightly performed, if we do in the least admit of this same unruly Passion of Anger into the Consultation. Anger is never proper to consult, tho’ sometimes it may help to execute, by putting some Life and Vigour into the cooler and slower Consultations of Reason. That I may not be misunderstood, as if I meant
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that the Vice of Anger is ever good for any Thing; we must carefully distinguish between two Things, which in the World go under one Name; the natural Passion, and the Sin of Anger: The natural Passion is a Thing indifferent in itself, the right Use of which is a Virtue, and the wrong Use of it a Vice. It is true this natural Passion being much more frequently employed to a wrong than a right Use, for that Reason it goes more commonly under the Name of a Vice; and there have been some learned and good Men in the World, who have been altogether for banishing this Passion from having any Commerce with Virtue, as being of Opinion that right Reason and Judgment alone would act a great deal better without it, than with it. But for the same Reason they might be against all the other Passions of Love, Hatred, Desire and Aversion, Joy and Grief, Hope and Fear, as well as Anger, for they are all often abused; the right Inference from which Observation is, that we should reduce them to their right Use, not totally extirpate them: And the right Use of them all is, first, that we direct them to the proper Objects; then, that we keep them under good Command, as to the Measure and Degrees of that Use and Service we have for them. But that this *Christian* Philosophy, concerning the Use of the Passion of Anger, may be the better understood, even by Persons of the most ordinary Capacity, I will beg Leave to cast some Light upon it by a very homely Parable or Similitude; from which I hope to shew you both the Use and Abuse of the Passions, particularly of this Passion of Anger in human Life. Let us then compare Men

to Shepherds feeding their Flocks in a very large Range of Pasturage, of which some is in wild Mountains, some in spacious Plains, some in Thickets of Woods, some on Rocks and Precipices: Let us suppose, likewise, that every Flock is apt to stray, and that there are abundance of Wolves, and other Beasts of Prey, ready to catch and devour them; suppose, likewise, the Shepherds finding they were not themselves swift enough of Foot to surround the whole Range of Pasturage, and to gather in the Stragglers, but that the Wolves caught daily some of their Flock, and made their Escape with the Booty, before they could overtake them, and rescue it; suppose, I say, that the Shepherds observing these Things, and upon a deep Consultation how to remedy them, had by some of the wiser sort been advised to the Help of another sagacious Creature, and very officious and serviceable to Men, called *Dogs*; by a good breeding and Management of which they might be wonderfully assisted in the Defence of their Flocks, as being both sagacious to smell out the Enemy, and dexterous in following him upon the Scent; very fierce and stout, likewise, in attacking, especially when set on, and animated and assisted by Men; swift of Foot too, to scour the Grounds, and to bring in the Stragglers out of Danger; and, withal, very wakeful in the Night-time, and apt immediately to make a Noise, and to give the Alarm upon the first Approach of the Enemy; this seemed to be a notable Expedient: But when it came to be put in Practice, a great many of the Dogs proved exceeding pernicious; they flew at Friend and Foe, and whenever they were hungry,

or in the least provoked by the butting of any of the Flock, in their Masters Absence they would fall upon them, and devour them; and sometimes, when set on gently to pinch and reduce a Straggler, could not be brought off till they had worried or crippled him, and in a short Time did so much Damage, that, upon a second Consultation, some of the Shepherds had almost concluded to destroy all the *Dogs*, and to undertake the feeding and defending of their Flocks without them, till they were dissuaded by others, wiser than the rest, who had trained *their Dogs* so well to the Business, that they had quite laid aside the Savageness of their Nature, and would sooner starve than hurt one of the Flock, in the mean time performing all the other Parts of watchful Centinels, of careful Keepers, of swift Gatherers and Reducers of the Flock; and sharp upon the Scent, and fierce upon the Fight of an Enemy: And therefore they persuaded the rest, instead of destroying the Dogs, to take a great deal of Pains to train, watch, and govern them well, by which Means they should find a great deal of Help and good Service, and no Prejudice from them at all. Thus it is with all our Passions, and particularly with this Passion of Anger; if we take Pains with it, and keep it under the strict Command of Reason and Grace; if we let it loose to exercise its Fierceness upon none but such as Reason has before taught it are Enemies; if we can set it on, and take it off, wherever it is just and fitting, and sometimes, only with a Design to bark, to frighten and scare People to their Duty, without hurting them; at other Times giving them a gentle Pinch of Punishment, if a

Bark of Reproof won't reclaim them; if in the whole Management of Anger we keep a good Command, that it exceed not the Bounds of Reason and Religion, we shall find a great deal of Benefit from it, and that it is of excellent Use in the Government both of larger and lesser Societies, and in regulating all our own Actions with Comfort and Advantage. The particular Cases and Directions upon them, are so large a *Theme*, that I shall not meddle with them. The Virtue by which we thus govern our Anger, and keep it within just Bounds, is called *Meekness*. I shall just give you some of the chief Properties of it, that ye may have so much the clearer Notion what a blessed Thing it is; and then go on to the Reason of the Text, to shew how *The Meek shall inherit the Earth*.

I. The *First* and chief Ingredient in this *Meekness*, is an inward Calmness and Tranquillity of Mind. In the eleventh Chapter of this Gospel, at the twenty-ninth Verse, it is called a *Meekness and Lowliness of Heart*. *Learn of me*, says our Saviour, *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. Without this, all outward Calmness will come much short of this Virtue of *Meekness*; for some, from a Dulness and Heaviness of Temper, others from Policy and a deep-laid Revenge, others from Fear and Cowardice, either have not, or think not fit to express any Anger and Resentment; who yet are Strangers to this best Part of *Meekness*, this inward Tranquillity, which checks and suppresses the very first Motions to Anger in the Heart. As this is the chief, so it is the difficultest Part of *Meekness*, as being the Product and Result of a good Conscience towards God, of a Kindness

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and true Love to our Neighbour, of good Designs, and honest Actions, and a Freedom from all such restless, anxious, or revengeful Thoughts, as may ruffle or discompose our inward Peace.

2. This inward Tranquillity of Mind shews it self in an outward, affable, courteous, kind, and friendly Behaviour to Men. The meek Man has no Fierceness or Haughtiness in his Countenance, no Rudeness or Harshness in his Speech, nothing that is insolent or affronting in his Actions; he is not censorious or captious, hasty or precipitate; he has the Civility and Patience to give Men a fair Hearing, and to hear them to an End, and even to pardon their Indiscretions: His own, both Words and Actions, receive a sweet Tincture from the inward good Temper of his Mind; for as he loves to do Good, so he loves to do it after a kind and obliging Manner; and even where Reason will not allow him to grant People's Requests, he studies to deny in a gentle and winning Way, without Harshness and Severity; as being, before he can deny others, obliged first to use a Piece of Self-denial upon himself, in resisting his Inclination to Acts of Favour and Beneficence.

3. The *Meek* Man is slow to Anger. As he does by no means encourage Tale-bearers and Back-biters, so he is not forward to give Credit to any Stories that tend to the Hurt or Prejudice of others, or to stir up his Anger against them; but is apt to put the best and fairest Construction on his Neighbour's Words and Actions they are capable of: Nay, further, he has so entirely subdued the Passion of Anger in himself, that it is no easy Matter for him to awaken and let it loose, even where there is just Occasion for it; the Ways

of Severity being used by him only as last Remedies, after all softer and milder Courses have been tried in vain.

4. The *Meek* Man keeps due Measures, and is prudent and moderate in his Passion, tempering it with a Spirit of Calmness and Moderation. As there is great Difference between the Rebukes of a Friend, and the Reproaches of an Enemy; between a steady Pace, and a furious Driving; between a well-disciplined Dog's pinching the Ear, and a bloody Sheep-biter's flying at the Throat; so the meek Man can rebuke, chastise, and restore a Delinquent in the Spirit of Meekness, gaining upon his Reason, without provoking his Passion, or driving him to desperate Extremes. He has a great Compassion for Men in Distress, and a due Regard to their Frailties and Infirmities, and to the Temptations which overcome them; remembering that he himself is in the Body.

5. The *Meek* Man lets go his Anger as soon as possibly he can in Reason, at least he suffers it not to settle into a fixed Hatred, or lasting Resentment, but is ready to embrace all Overtures of Reconciliation; for the sake of which he is often willing to part with somewhat of his own just Right, rather than keep up a Quarrel.

6. I shall add but one Thing more in the Description of this Virtue of *Meekness*, that we may know it the better, at least from the Company it keeps; that is, that it is always joined with Humility, Resignation, Contentment, Cheerfulness, Courtesy, Gratitude, Moderation, Peaceableness, Kindness, Patience, Forgiveness of Injuries, Charity, and all other social and good-natur'd Virtues,

tues, with most of which it is so connected in the holy Scriptures, that I do not know whether they ought not to enter into the Definition of it, at least they are such necessary Properties and Qualifications of it, that it is not of the right Stamp without them.

So much for the first Thing I proposed, The Description of *Meekness*.

2. I proceed next to consider the Blessing here annexed to the *Meek*, namely, that *They shall inherit the Earth*.

Some Interpreters give us a very strained Exposition of this Promise, as if by *Earth* were meant *Heaven*, that being eminently the Land of the Living. Some others think it must be that *New Earth* St. Peter speaks of, *Wherein dwelleth Righteousness*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. What has driven both these to those Interpretations, must be the seeming Strangeness and Unusualness of worldly Comforts among the Gospel Promises, especially among these Beatitudes, where all the rest of the Promises seem to be of a more spiritual Nature. But whatever there is in this, (for perhaps we shall find it otherwise when we come to consider the two next Beatitudes,) I think it is a dangerous Thing, because of our puzzling Objections, to depart from the Letter, or plain literal Meaning of any Text. The Words are a punctual Quotation out of Psal. xxxvii. 11. *But the Meek shall inherit the Earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of Peace*. Where, no doubt, David understood it of this Earth of ours, or of the Land of *Canaan*. For the Tenor of that whole Psalm is designed to shew that wicked Men shall by God's Judgments suddenly perish, whilst the

Righteous lived easily and quietly in the Land of *Canaan*. For clearing the Difficulty of the Words then, understood as a temporal Promise, we are not presently to fancy that, because it is said, *The Meek shall inherit the Earth*, it is therefore promised that they shall have a great Affluence and abundance of Things temporal to make them great and rich in this World. Our Saviour has told us, *Luke xii. 15.* that *Man's Life*, (that is, the true Felicity of it) *doth not consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possesseth*. And therefore if the Felicity of this Life doth not consist in Riches, we have no Reason to believe they are here promised. If we look into that Part of the *Psalms* from whence this Quotation is brought, there seem to be these two Things meant by this Promise to the Meek. 1. *First*, God's Blessing and Protection to them and their Families, when his Judgments should overtake and cut off the the Wicked. *For evil Doers*, says he, *(a) shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the Earth: For yet a little While and the Wicked shall not be; yea, thou shall diligently consider his Place, and it shall not be*. So that here is a Promise of Protection to the Meek, and a Threatning of Excision to the Wicked. 2. Another Thing meant by *inheriting the Earth* there, is their enjoying their Portion of it with Quietness, Contentment, and Satisfaction. *But the Meek shall inherit the Earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of Peace*; which Promises signify both their having a Competency of the good Things of this Life, and the inward Contentment of Mind, and Freedom from An-

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xiety and carking Care, with which they enjoy it. These three, then, *Protection, a Competency, and Contentment*, appear plainly to have been signified by this Promise in that 37th *Psalms* from whence the Words are taken; and why these may not be the same Blessings that are here promised, I can see no Reason. The like temporal Promises we have in the *New Testament*. St. Paul tells us, that *Godliness has the Promise both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. and our blessed Saviour has told us, that *if we seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, all these Things*, meaning all worldly Necessaries, shall be added unto us, *Mat. vi. 33*. Why may we not then interpret and believe this Text in the plain Sense, which the Words import? Which, to take it at the lowest, is this, that to the Meek God will provide a Competency of earthly Blessings, which he will bestow upon them as an Inheritance; that is, they shall have them easily, and without great Trouble; without anxious Care and Sollicitude; for that is the Vice he is dehorting from in the 6th Chapter of St. *Matthew* just now quoted: And the Word *inherit* is very proper to express this Sense; because what comes to Men by Inheritance, comes much more easily than what comes by *hard Labour*. *They shall inherit the Earth*, then, is, as if he had said, They shall have enough of the World, without the carking Care and Sollicitudes of it; it shall come to them easily, and without great Trouble, as Inheritances drop into People's Laps, which they never wrought or laboured for.

It is true, the Gospel is so full of a better sort of Promises, that these temporal ones are easily over-looked, and I doubt by many but little believed; tho', I question not, Experience, as well as Scripture, will confirm this Truth, that God's Blessing, with a Competency of all good Things necessary for this Life, is usually bestowed upon good Men. But it may perhaps seem strange, that, supposing this to be true of good Men in general, such a Promise should be here annexed to the Virtue of *Meekness*, a Virtue which of all other seems to expose a Man the most to Oppression and Injuries of all sorts from their insolent Neighbours. To this I have some Things to answer, which may be worthy of your Consideration. 1. *First*, That our blessed Lord might chuse to instance in the *Meek* for this very Reason, because he is more exposed to Injuries, and, in the Eye of the World, seemingly more naked and defenceless than others; like that Promise of Defence to the Innocent, and Threatning to Oppressors, Psal. xii. 5. *For the Oppression of the Poor, for the sighing of the Needy, now will I arise, (saith the Lord) I will set him in Safety from him that puffeth at him.* I take this Promise in my Text to be a particular Declaration that God will take the humble meek Man under his Protection, and that the less he goes about either to hurt others, or to avenge himself, God will so much the more defend him. 2. It is worth our Consideration, that tho' the meek Man, if we consider him as standing alone, seems to be very much over-matched by the proud and fierce Oppressor; yet if we will consider him as he is commonly fenced and guarded with the Countenance and Protection

tection of Laws and Government, and with the Friendship and Love of his Neighbours, and the general good Opinion of all Men, (whereas the Oppressor is as much discountenanced and hated;) we shall find the meek Man is not so much overmatched, as at first Sight he would seem to be. For to consider these Things a little more particularly, (1.) It is certain that Laws and Government, generally speaking, are of the Side of the innocent meek Man. This is the very Purport and Intent of their Make and Constitution, and wherever this true Intent of Law and Government is pursued, Oppressors are forced to keep in their Horns, and let their meek and peaceable Neighbours enjoy their own in Quiet. (2.) Besides this Assistance from the Publick to meek and peaceable Men, it is to be considered, that they are commonly happy in the Love and Kindness of their Neighbours, which proves generally a very great Help and Protection to them. For supposing those Neighbours to be either good or bad themselves, they commonly agree in the Protection of the Meek and Innocent against the Insults and Injuries of the Oppressor. For as for the Good, they are usually better linked in Friendship, and so more able and willing to stand by and protect one another; and as for the Bad, howsoever they may be inclined to oppressive Courses themselves, they do not care to countenance the Oppressions of others. And it has been often observed, that when one wicked Man has oppressed a poor Neighbour, another, not much better, has undertaken the Defence and Protection of him; and so he has kept his Inheritance and Possession, which, if he had stood alone, he could

could not so well have defended. (3.) *Lastly*, Let it be considered, that there is a great Share of worldly Comfort and Felicity doth very naturally and usually attend the meek good-conditioned Man, and that (*eo nomine*) upon account of his Meekness. To name you some Instances of this, for I have not now Time to enlarge,

(1.) He is so peaceable and good-conditioned, that he seldom has any Quarrels or Controversies with his Neighbours; he gives no Provocation, and consequently the fewer are given to him, and when injured, he passes by many small Faults; and for greater Injuries, he tries all calm and peaceable Ways of reconciling and making them up: So that he is much less at Law, and in Broils and Quarrels, than other Men; and this saves him both his Money and his Quiet.

(2.) He is so good a Subject, and so obedient to Government, that he will live quietly and peaceably under it if he can; and therefore he is in less Danger than other Men of being engaged in Factions, Rebellions, and Insurrections, which destroy Men's Estates and Peace.

(3.) Being mild and good-conditioned, and making all easy that are about him, he is more like to have the great Blessing of Peace at Home in his own Family, than other angry and ill-conditioned Men; and this, besides that it is a most valuable Blessing in itself, is likewise the Cause of many other Blessings: It makes Husbands and Wives, Children and Servants, love their Homes, and mind their Business with Pleasure and Delight. Where this is, there is no drawing contrary Ways, but all join unanimously in the Yoke, and chearfully carry on their Business.

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(4.) The mild and good-conditioned Man, doing no Harm, but all the Good he can to his Neighbours, has commonly many Friends, and but few Enemies; and his Friends are generally of the best, and his Enemies of the worst sort of Men: His Temper is such, as is aptest to make a Friend, and to soften an Enemy; so that generally speaking he is happier in a good quiet Neighbourhood, that wishes him well, and are ready to help him out upon a Pinch, than most other Men.

(5.) Being in his Temper well disposed to be a good Subject, (as I observed before,) he has generally the Protection of Laws, and Favour of Government, which is a great earthly Blessing.

(6.) If such a Man, who has been kind and good to all, should happen to meet with Crosses and Losses in the World, he will be sure to find more Pity, Countenance, and Relief, in his Adversity, than other Men, who never were good themselves, nor good to their Neighbours in their Prosperity.

(7.) *Lastly*, (which is above all the rest,) Whatever Portion the meek Man has of the good Things of this Life, be it great or small, he enjoys it with a quiet contented Mind, and God's Blessing; and then I am sure he is rich enough: For, as the Apostle saith, 1 Tim. vi. 6. *Godliness with Contentment is great Gain.*

From all which Considerations we may see how this Promise of the *Meek's inheriting the Earth* is made good in a literal Sense. I must only add one Caution, which will answer all Objections, and which, if it had been considered, would have prevented the interpreting of this

Text

Text away from the literal Sense. It is this, that temporal Promises, as they are not to be understood to obstruct spiritual or eternal ones, so they are to be always taken in Subordination to them. So that God must not be thought to evacuate or frustrate a temporal Promise, when he makes it give Place to a spiritual or eternal one: As if instead of a worldly Inheritance he should by the way of the Cross bring us to an Increase of Grace here, or to the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter. He has not then fallen short of his temporal Promise, but has far exceeded it. As a Man would not be worse than his Word who had promised a Friend a Legacy, and instead of that should make him his Heir. St. *Peter* argues this Case excellently, and I shall conclude with it, and desire to leave it with you, as the Sum of what I have now said of this temporal Promise to the Meek. It is in 1 *Pet.* iii. 9. where he assures the good *Christians*, to whom he writes, of God's Blessing, Protection, and Assistance. *Ye are called*, says he, *to inherit a Blessing. For he that will love Life, and see good Days, (there's the inheriting the Earth,) let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; let him eschew Evil, and do Good, let him seek Peace, and ensue it.* (There's a Description of *the Meek*.) Then follows, *first*, a Promise of God's Blessing and Protection to him; *For the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers: But the Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil.* Then, *secondly*, the general Favour of Men, *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* Lastly, A Supposition of the worst (which answers my last Caution:)

Caution:) If the World and the Favour of Men should fail, there is a better State of Happiness to come after all this: *But if ye do suffer for Righteousness sake happy are ye.* And so he goes on to describe the Blessings of the Cross, and the higher Felicities prepared for them in a better Life. But I doubt I trespass upon your Patience. God of his infinite Mercy multiply upon you all Blessings both spiritual and temporal in *Christ Jesus. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.*

S E R M O N VII.

MAT. V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after
Righteousness: For they shall be filled.*

The First Sermon on this Text.

OUR Saviour's Disciples and Followers had now their Expectations mightily raised with the News of the approaching Kingdom of the *Messiah*, with which both *John the Baptist* and he himself began to acquaint them in their Sermons; but having withal very carnal Notions of that Kingdom, as if by Violence and Conquest they were to acquire great Wealth and Honour, and to live merry sensual Lives in the *Messiah's* Service; they flocked after him with their Minds full of Covetousness, Oppression, Cruelty, Injustice, and Thoughts of Conquest, the unfittest Temper of Mind for his Service that could possibly be imagined. And therefore it is very observable, that *simul & semel*, so soon as *John Baptist* and he communicated the good News of the *Messiah's* Kingdom being at Hand, they preached up likewise the Necessity of a new Disposition of Mind, or a Change of Heart and Life, which we call *Repentance*. *Repent*, said they, *for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.*

Hand. And not contented with preaching the Doctrine of Repentance in general, they descended to the Particulars, and told their Hearers what new Dispositions of Heart, and Amendments of Life, were necessary for all Men in general, and for the divers Ranks and Stations of Men in particular, as they had Occasion to address them.

This Sermon on the Mount seems to be particularly levelled against the common Indispositions of Heart, and Errors of Life, which they were guilty of who looked for the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; for in it our Saviour acquaints the People and his Disciples who are the blessed Persons who shall be admitted to that Kingdom, namely, not the Covetous and Ambitious, but *the Poor in Spirit*; not the Luxurious and Licitious, but the *serious, penitent Mourners*; not the Fierce and Haughty, but *the Meek and Lowly*; not they who gaped after, and hoped to possess themselves of their Neighbours Estates by unjust Conquest, but they who studied an exact *Honesty and Uprightness* in all their Dealings; not the Cruel and Hard-hearted, but *the Merciful and Charitable*; not the Lewd and Unclean, but *the Pure in Heart*; not the Fighting and Contentious, but *the Quiet and Peaceable*; not the Persecutors, but *the Persecuted for Christ's sake and their Duty*. So that all the Beatitudes are the setting up of so many quite contrary Dispositions of Mind to those they were prepossessed with, and only more particular Instances of the general Doctrine, that they were *to repent, because the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of the Messiah, was at Hand*.

But now to come to this particular Beatitude, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness: For they shall be filled.* In these Words we have two Things distinctly proposed to our Consideration.

I. A Virtue recommended; *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after Righteousness.*

II. The particular Felicity promised to the Practisers of this Virtue; *For they shall be filled.*

Neither of them is without its Difficulty; and because I apprehend this Text is not rightly understood, neither by the Generality of Readers, nor Interpreters, I must request your more unprejudicate and serious Attention, while I open up what seems to me to be the true Sense and Meaning of it.

I. To begin with the Virtue recommended, which is *the hungering and thirsting after Righteousness.* The Word *Righteousness* is used in several Senses in the *New Testament*, which has occasioned some Variety of Interpretations concerning the Meaning of it in this Place. I shall consider them distinctly, that we may the better weigh them one against the other.

1. *First*, then, Righteousness is sometimes used in a borrowed Law Sense, not for real, but imputed Righteousness; when a Man is cleared in Judgment, whether by standing upon his Justification, or by pleading his Pardon. This last is *the Righteousness of Faith in Christ, by which we are justified before God*; and tho' it is not used in this Sense in the Gospels, nor any where else in the *New Testament*, except in St. Paul's Epistles; yet

yet because this is a very desirable Thing, and therefore a proper Object for our spiritual *Hunger and Thirst*, it has been pitched upon as the Sense by sundry well-meaning Interpreters. But, for two or three Reasons, I think it can't be the *Righteousness* here meant. For, 1. We may observe, that when *Righteousness* is to be understood in this borrowed Law Sense, the Apostle generally adds some Words for the Explication of it; calling it; *the Righteousness of Faith*, or *the Righteousness of God*, or *Righteousness imputed*; but uses not the Word alone, without some Addition, or previous or concomitant Description, from which we may know that it is to be determined to that Sense. 2. It is not very probable that before the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in *Christ* was as yet preached or taught, our Saviour would have used the Word *Righteousness* in this borrowed Sense, as knowing it must needs at that Time be altogether unintelligible to his Hearers. 3. I think it will appear plain, to any attentive Reader, that it is not the Doctrine of *Justification*, but the Doctrine of *Sanctification*, or *new Life*, which our Lord in these *Beatitudes* is endeavouring to inculcate upon his Disciples and Auditory, as a necessary Prerequisite, or Disposition for the evangelical State; and therefore it seems no way agreeable to the Scope of the Place, to recommend as yet the Doctrine of *Christ's* imputed Righteousness.

The Word *Righteousness*, then, I judge must be taken here in a moral Sense; but even thus, it is used wider or narrower in the *Holy Scriptures*: For sometimes by *Righteousness* is meant that *universal Righteousness* consisting in a sincere Endeavour

vour to comply with the whole Duty of Man ; and sometimes the particular Virtue of *Justice*, which gives every Man his Due. Now it is the *first* of these which Interpreters most commonly take to be meant in this Place ; and, according to them, the Meaning of the Words, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness ; for they shall be filled* ; is as if our Lord had said, Blessed are they who have an earnest Desire after Holiness, for they shall not miss of their Aim, but shall certainly attain what they so earnestly long for. But tho' this is a true Doctrine, and a very pious Sense, yet when I consider the Scope of the Place, and the Context, I must be of Opinion against the greater Number of Interpreters, that by *Justice* or *Righteousness* here, is meant the particular Virtue of *Justice* or *Honesty* ; and that by *being filled*, or *satisfied*, is meant their having enough, or their enjoying a good Competency of the Blessings of this World ; or, in short, that their *Honesty* shall not impoverish them, but that it shall prove the best Way to increase and preserve their Estates. My Reasons for this Interpretation are these three : 1. All the other Beatitudes are particular Virtues, and therefore it is most probable that this *δικαιοσύνη*, which may very properly be rendered *Justice*, is a particular Virtue too. 2. This better answers our Saviour's Scope and Intent, which was to correct the bad Dispositions of Mind his Hearers were under with relation to the evangelical State. Now one notorious bad Disposition of Mind they were under was, that they expected, by the way of Fighting and Conquest, to invade other Men's Possessions ; the Covetousness of this Temper our Saviour had

corrected in another Beatitude; where he recommends *Poverty in Spirit*; and the Injustice of it he reprehends here. 3. Here is a great Catalogue of *Christian Virtues* enumerated in these *eight Beatitudes*; now how improbable is it that *one* of the *eight* should comprehend *the whole*? Besides, let it be tried in other Places of the *New Testament*, where there is any Enumeration of particular Virtues, and it will be found, that where-ever δικαιοσύνη, the Word here rendered *Righteousness*, is brought in, it is by common Consent of Interpreters understood to be the particular Virtue of *Justice*. I shall quote two of these Catalogues, besides this of my Text, where this of *Justice* or *Righteousness* makes a Part; and in both these it is the particular Virtue of *Justice* that is meant and recommended. The *first* is 1 Tim. vi. ii. *But thou, O Man of God, flee these Things*, (he had been speaking of the Sins of Covetousness,) and then he adds, *and follow after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness*. Where we see he recommends to *Timothy* six Virtues, as opposite to Covetousness, and *Righteousness* (that is, *Justice*) at the Head of them. The *second* is 2 Tim. ii. 22. where dissuading from youthful Lusts, among some other, he recommends this Virtue; *Flee also youthful Lusts*, says he, *but follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart*. I might observe the same of the Word δίκαιος, which is rendered *Righteous*, or *Just*: As Tit. i. 8. among the Qualifications of a *Christian Bishop*, it is required that he be *sober, just, holy, and temperate*. Now is there not in these *eight Beatitudes* as great a Catalogue of Vir-

tues as is enumerated in any of the other Passages, of which Catalogue this is but one? In these other Passages it is understood in the Sense of the particular Virtue of *Justice*, and why not in this, for the same Reasons? I conclude, then, that when our Saviour saith here, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, or Justice*; the Sense is, as if he had said, Ye imagine the Followers of the *Messiah* shall conquer great Cities and Countries, and that by no other Right or Title, besides that of the Sword, they shall invade the Wealth and Possessions of other Men; and ye are push'd on with as eager Desires after these Things, as an hungry Man hath after Meat, or a thirsty Man after Drink: But ye are under a great Mistake, the Kingdom of the *Messiah* abhors every Thing that is wrongful or unjust; and therefore if ye design to be good Subjects of that Kingdom, instead of longing after your Neighbour's Goods and Possessions, desire above all Things honest Hearts and Souls, free from all sinister Biases and Affection; and that ye may have both the Judgment to know, and the Inclination to do Right and Justice to all Mankind. This I take to be the right Meaning of the Virtue recommended. And now, since I am upon paraphrasing our Saviour's Meaning of the Virtue, I will add, too, the Meaning of the Promise annexed, *For they shall be filled*; which, after St. *Chrysostome* upon the Place, I take to be, as if he had said, In walking justly and honestly, ye shall be sufficiently provided for as to all worldly Necessaries; your Honesty shall not impoverish you, but ye shall have sufficient and enough to supply
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all your temporal Wants, besides the Affluence of all Blessings in Heaven.

The Duty then here recommended, I take to be a great Love of Justice; *the hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*: I purposely chuse to call it by the Name of *Justice*. For tho' the Word *Righteousness* sometimes may comprehend all that is any way due to our Neighbour, even Relief in his Wants, as well as his legal just Demands; yet here I judge it must be interpreted in a more limited Sense, only for the Duty of *Justice*; and that because *Mercy*, the other great Branch of our Duty to our Neighbour, has a distinct Consideration in the very next *Beatitude*. And I call it a great Love of Justice, because it is here resembled to those most quick and pungent Desires of *Hunger and Thirst*, which have a vehement Tendency to Satisfaction.

But that I may afford this Virtue a clearer Consideration, I shall distinctly, but as briefly as such an ample Subject will admit, consider both the Object *Justice*, and the Act of *hungering and thirsting after it*.

As to the Object, *Justice*, or *Righteousness*, it is of a very large Extent, as reaching to all those Virtues by which our Neighbour has any Right to claim from us, or not to be injured by us. And this, in some Respects, will reach further than even the large Duties of the whole second Table of the Law; for by giving a bad Example in transgressing the Duties of the *first* Table of the Law, which relate to our Duty to God, we may be guilty of a great Piece of Injustice to our Neighbour, in seducing him from his Duty, and so in ruining his Soul to all Eternity. The same

may be said of our Duty to ourselves; for tho' every Transgression of *that* is not directly an Injustice to our Neighbour, yet if by so doing we either give our Neighbour a bad Example, or by disordering ourselves we unfit and indispose ourselves for discharging our Duty to our Neighbour, we become guilty of Injustice toward him.

But, more particularly, the Duty of *Justice* relates to those large Duties of the *second* Table of the Law, wherein we stand bound to our Neighbour in several Capacities, whether we come to the Knowledge of them by the Light and Law of Nature, (which is not so much blinded as to *them*, as it is in the Duties of Piety relating to Almighty God,) or by the Law of *Moses* with the Explication of the Prophets in the *Old Testament*, or by the more perfect Laws of *Christ*, and the Explications of the *Apostles* in the *New*; or even by the Laws and Constitutions of Kingdoms and Commonwealths, and other legal Societies or Authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical: For all these, in so far as they are not contrary to the Laws of God, are approved and commanded to be observed by the *Christian* Institution; as St. *Peter* observes, 1 Pet. ii. 13. *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake.* And further, all good, laudable, and friendly Customs and Practices, are in general recommended. Phil. iv. 8. *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, (that is, decent or honourable,) whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, (or friendly, προσφιλῆ,) whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these Things.* So that
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there is nothing due to our Neighbour, either by the Law of Nature, or by the positive Laws of God, or by the Laws of the Land, or by any friendly laudable Custom or Practice; but this Virtue of *Justice*, or *Righteousness*, as explained by the *Christian* Religion, requires it to be payed him: For it would not have us fall short in any Thing, which by any of these Titles is justly our Neighbour's Due. *Render therefore to all their Dues: Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour. Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another: For he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law*, Rom. xiii. 7, 8.

I should much exceed the Bounds of a Sermon, if I went about to describe to you all the particular Branches of this Duty of *Justice*, as it relates to the Soul and Body, the Goods and good Name of our Neighbour; nay, if I did but describe what is due to all Men in general, without entering into that great Body of Duty resulting from the particular Relations of Magistrates and Subjects, Husbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants, Pastors and People, Creditors and Debtors, Buyers and Sellers, those that commit a Trust and those who receive it, those that oblige others and those who are obliged by them, and all the other numerous Relations of Life; I shall only tell you, that the *Christian* Religion is so far from discouraging, or even from neglecting and overlooking these Matters of *Morality* and common *Justice* and *Honesty*, that it carefully recommends them in the amplest Manner; that is, not only as the best Legislators, and best Magistrates, and best Neighbours would require, but as we ourselves would wish to be dealt

dealt by ourselves in the like Circumstances; which will certainly take in the utmost that not only *Law* and *strict Justice*, but what the largest *Equity* and *good Conscience* would dictate to be due to our Neighbour.

I shall add but one Thing more relating to this *Justice* or *Righteousness*, which is, that perhaps it is not only our *own Justice*, as it is a Virtue in ourselves, which we are to understand here to be aimed at, and so ardently wished for; but likewise the *Justice* or *Righteousness* of *others*. We are to be so great *Lovers of Justice*, as not only to abstain from all Acts of Injustice ourselves, but to wish and endeavour, to the utmost of our Power, to promote *Justice* and *Righteousness* among others, and in our several Stations to prevent or remedy all Frauds and Oppressions, and all manner of Injustice, Extortion, or Exaction in the World.

So much for *Justice* or *Righteousness*, which is the Object of this Duty in my Text. I proceed next to consider the Act of *Hungering and Thirsting*. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness*. By this *Hungering and Thirsting* I understand a high Degree of Love and Desire; as if he had said, Blessed are they who have a prevalent Love and Desire after Justice or Honesty, in all Actions, Dealings, Laws, Judgments, Decrees and Transactions whatsoever. But perhaps this may be thought an unsuitable Expression if apply'd to this particular Virtue, *Justice* and *Honesty* in our Actions not being a Virtue so hard to learn, that we need to have such longing Desires after it. For answering this Doubt, and to clear the Propriety of the Phrase in the Text, I desire

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these few Things may be considered. 1. That as for the Propriety of the Expression of *Hungering and Thirsting after Justice*, it seems to me to be chosen from, and levelled at that wicked and unjust Inclination of Mind they had after other Men's Estates, of which they expected the Kingdom of the *Messiah* would put them in Possession, which covetous Inclination is well described by *Hungering and Thirsting*; as if he had said, "Blessed are they who instead of being hungry and thirsty after their Neighbours Estates, by the way of Fraud and unjust Conquest, desire above all Things to wrong no Body; but what they get, to get it fairly and honestly." So that the Phrase of *Hungering and Thirsting* being transferred from the unjust and oppressive Desire and Pursuit of our Neighbour's Wealth, (of which it is a very lively Description) to the direct Opposite of it, the Love of Justice, is very proper and significant; and such elegant *Antitheses* between Virtue and Vice the Scripture frequently uses, as *Jer. ix. 3.* where having said that *They bent their Tongues like their Bow for Lies*: He adds, *But they are not valiant for the Truth.* So (a) *Fear not them who kill the Body, but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear.* So (b) *Lay not up for yourselves Treasures upon Earth, but lay up Treasures in Heaven.* So here, as if he had said, Do not thirst after other Men's Estates, which ye must very wrongfully come at; but hunger and thirst after an honest Heart and Soul, which will keep you from all such unjust Courses. 2. Consider, that tho' *Justice* and *Honesty* seems an easy Virtue, and one of the Things which are in our

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(a) Luke xii. 4.

(b) Mat. vi. 19.

own Power; and therefore not so properly the Object of our earnest Desires, yet there are really considerable Difficulties in it, the overcoming of which it may be very reasonable to wish for; such as these following. (1.) Truth and Justice is often difficult to discern which Side it lies on; and we want a great deal of Knowledge and Consideration, and Freedom from Prejudice and Partiality, and a great deal of God's good Conduct and Direction, to find it out; and therefore it may properly be the Object of our Desire. (2.) Even when we have Knowledge and Consideration enough to discern *Truth* from *Falshood*, and *Right* from *Wrong*, we are often insensibly carried by so strong Biasses of worldly Interest, Self-love, and urgent Necessity, that we cannot easily incline our Wills to follow the Rectitude of our Judgments; and in that Case, with the hardened *Jews*, having Eyes we see not, and having Ears we hear not, and having Hearts we understand not; and if there is not then a superior Inclination to Justice, to conquer all those Prejudices and Biasses of Self-love and worldly Interest, our Understandings, like a bribed Judge, will be apt to give Sentence on the wrong Side: And therefore we have great Reason to wish for this strong Propensity and superior Inclination to *Justice*, which, like *Hunger and Thirst*, may give us no Rest till we satisfy it. (3.) Consider, that if it is not only our own *Justice* we are to desire, but a general Prevalency of *Justice* and *Righteousness* in the World; this is most properly a Thing to be longed for, as being exceedingly wanted in the World, and not easily in the Power of any Man to compass: So that the Expression of *Hungering and*

and Thirsting after Justice, is still very proper. And upon all these Accounts we have Reason to believe, that this prevailing Love and Regard to Justice, both in ourselves and others, is the Virtue to which we are here exhorted.

So much for the Explication of the *First* Part of my Text, which recommends the Virtue of *Justice*; *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness*. I find Time will not allow my entering on the *Second* Part, which describes the *Felicity* of such Persons, that *They shall be filled, or satisfied*. I must wait for a further Opportunity for affording it a due Consideration.

I shall only add a short Word by way of Exhortation to *Three* sorts of Persons, for the more effectual securing the Duty of *Justice* or *Honesty* that I have been describing.

I. My *First* Advice is to some who neglect the Study of *Justice* as if there were little or nothing in it, as if it were a Thing too low for the high Dispensation of the Gospel, a meer Matter of Form, or a Thing that is to be made subservient to our worldly Interests: For if we had not such a mean Opinion of it, how is it possible that it should be governed so much by Party and Interest, and selfish and partial Considerations, as it is in the World? Surely we either fancy *Justice* to be nothing antecedently to our Sentences, or we take not sufficient Pains to find it out; or if we have any Notions of it, they are quickly drowned in the more prevalent Considerations of Party, or Interest, and By-aims and Advantages for ourselves and our Friends and Families. Now what I offer is, that *Justice* is a noble Virtue, and ought to be set above all these By-regards; and it is a
Virtue

Virtue which the *Christian* Religion always recommends in the most honourable Manner. Here we see it is assumed into the Number of the *Beatitudes*, which are the chief *Christian* Graces and Virtues; and in many Passages of *St. Paul's* Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, it is recommended as a principal Virtue necessary for *their* Function. I have already in this Discourse quoted three several Places out of those Epistles, where *Righteousness* or *Justice* is recommended to *them*: *St. Paul* thought it necessary to insist on this, even to so good Men, that (c) *Nothing should be done by Partiality*. Let us not imagine, because *Justice* is a Virtue which the very Light of Nature teaches a *Turk* or an *Heathen*, that therefore it is below the Regard of a *Christian*: He knows but little of *Christianity*, who knows not that it establishes and advances towards greater Perfection, all good *Morals*, and censures and condemns those who, neglecting these, would place Religion in Matters of Form and Ceremony. (d) *Wo to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites*, says our Saviour, *for ye pay Tythe of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the more weighty Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith*. Let us assure ourselves, then, that he is but a very sorry *Christian*, and deserves not the Name, who has not the moral Honesty and Justice of an *Heathen*; he that cannot be depended on for the Truth of his Words, nor for the Fidelity of his Oaths and Promises, nor for the Fairness of his Accounts, nor for the Uprightness of his Votes, nor for the Honesty of his Work, nor for the faithful Discharge of a Trust; he that will lie, cheat,

(c) 1 Tim. v. 21.

(d) Mat. xxiii. 23.

cheat, equivocate, oppress, exact, or forswear, and contrive Snares to entrap his honest Neighbour for a little Gain; how will he ever come up to the higher Precept of *doing by others, as we would be done by ourselves?*

2. My *Second* Advice shall be to them who are so far convinced of the Duty of *Justice* and *Honesty*, that they are resolved to set about it; and to them I must recommend the Practice of several other *Christian* Virtues, without which it will be very hard, if not impossible, to preserve their *Honesty*. I shall but just name the chief of those that are necessary to this End, because I have not Time to insist upon them. (1.) If ye intend to be *Just and Honest*, study *The Fear of God*; for if ye are honest only out of regard to human Laws, or Reputation, this is no *Honesty* at all, but the *Fear of Men, and Self-love*; and besides, without the Fear of God ye will find abundance of Opportunities for Dishonesty, which either human Laws have not provided against, or human Care and Authority cannot, or is not willing to discover. (2.) If we would be honest, it is necessary to avoid *Covetousness* and *Ambition*; and as we are often advised by our Religion not to aim at great Things in the World, but *having Food and Raiment*, that is, the Necessaries of Life, *let us be therewith content*; that so we may lie under no Temptation from a boundless Love of Wealth or Greatness, to do unjust or dishonest Things: Not but that if God adds Wealth to our honest Endeavours, we are thankfully to accept it, and to make good use of it, but never to covet it, or to be biased from the strict Rule of *Honesty* from the Consideration
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of it. (3.) He that would be *Just* and *Honest*, should be diligent in the Business of his lawful Calling; for Idleness brings Want, and *Want* is a great Temptation to Injustice and Dishonesty. (4.) If ye would be *Honest*, let me recommend another Virtue very friendly to Honesty, that is, *Frugality*; avoiding carefully Drunkenness, Luxury, Prodigality, too high Living, deep Gaming, and all other wasteful, not only *Vices*, but *Fashions* and *Customs*, which engage you in an higher Expence, than your Calling and Income, and the necessary Provision for your Families, with Honesty can afford. (5.) Beware of *Litigiousness*, which is a great Enemy to Justice and Honesty, both as it drives us upon taking all Advantages of our Neighbour, and as it brings ourselves to Poverty, and so tempts to Dishonesty. (6.) There is another much better-natured Qualification, but very dangerous on the same Account, and that is *Suretyship*, of which we ought all of us to be at least so far cautious, as not to venture upon it to that Degree, as to incapacitate ourselves to pay our own just Debts, and to defray our own necessary Expences.

3. The *last* Advice I have to offer on this Subject, is to them who are conscious to themselves of having dealt unjustly or dishonestly by their Neighbour in any Matter; and it is, in short, that, in the first Place, they repent of the Sin before God; and, in the next Place, that they make *Reparation* and *Restitution* to their Neighbour to the utmost of their Power. We ought to have such a prevalent Propensity to Justice, expressed here by *Hungering and Thirsting after it*, that no Consideration, either of Shame or Poverty,

Poverty, should keep us from doing Right to those we have injured.

Several of these Things are of that Importance, that they deserve to have been more fully prosecuted, if I had not already too much trespassed on your Patience. Now God give us all Grace, that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we may live soberly, righteously, &c.

S E R M O N VIII.

MAT. V. 6.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness: For they shall be filled.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

AT the last Occasion I discoursed from the *First* Part of this Text, of the Duty of *Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness*; my Design is, at present, from the *Second* Part of it, to consider the *Promise* annexed to this Duty, *For they shall be filled or satisfied*. The Duty of *Hungering and Thirsting after Righteousness*, I interpreted to be a great *Love of Justice*, in Opposition to that wrong Notion our Saviour's Disciples, and the Multitudes, had of the *Messiah's* Kingdom; that his Followers were by no other Right, than that of Conquest, and the Power of the Sword, to enter upon the Wealth and Possessions of other Men. In Opposition, I say, to this false Notion, our Saviour here teaches, that a *Love of Justice and Honesty* is a principal Qualification for the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; and, for their Encouragement, that they should not need to fear their *Justice and Honesty* would so hamper them, as to deprive them of the Means of carrying on the great Designs

Designs of that Kingdom; for that God would so bless their just and honest Endeavours, that they should be fully satisfied as to all that was necessary or convenient for them. For supporting this Sense, besides the Authority of *St. Chrysostome* upon the Place, I desire the Meaning of the Word *χοπράζω* in the Text, which we translate *to fill*, may be thoroughly considered; for it signifies properly *to feed to a Satisfaction of Hunger*.

The Point of Doctrine, then, here taught in this Promise I have read, and which I intend as the Subject of the following Discourse, is this, “That Men of honest Principles, and true and just in their Dealings, need not fear that they shall be reduced to Want by their Honesty; for that God will take Care in his good Providence that they shall be supplied to their Content and Satisfaction.” This is a very comfortable *Promise*, and, were it duly minded and believed, would be a great Inducement to Truth and Fidelity in all our Words, and to Uprightness in all our Actions.

In speaking to this Subject, I shall confine myself to these two Heads of Discourse.

I. By way of Explication, I will endeavour to find out, and describe, what sort of Supply it is, which is promised here to just and honest Men, under these Words, *For they shall be filled*.

II. I will endeavour, from Scripture and Reason, to make it out, that this Promise shall be made good.

I. *First*, then, As to the Supply here promised to just and honest Men, that *they shall be filled, or satisfied*; we are not to believe that by this Promise is meant a great deal of superfluous Wealth; for this *filling* or *satisfying* has Relation to Men's *Hunger*; that is, to their *real* Wants and Necessities, not their *imaginary* ones. To take some Help, then, from the Supply of Hunger to which the Promise in my Text doth allude, it is not necessary we know, towards the satisfying of *Hunger*, that there be set before us a great Variety of Dishes, that we may eat a little of one, and a little of another; this is more the Demand of Luxury, than of natural Hunger; such great Variety is rather to provoke an *artificial*, than to satisfy a *natural* Appetite: And if the tasting a great Variety of Dishes is not necessary for the Supply of Hunger, far less is it necessary for that End, that there be a great Number of superfluous Dishes, not touched at all, but presented only for Show and Ornament; like the Miser's Wealth, who has no further Use of it than the satisfying of his Sight. Now to accommodate this to the Business in Hand, we are not to imagine, that, in order to the fulfilling the Promise in the Text, we are either to be supplied with a great Variety of luxurious Superfluities of Life, to please a nice dainty Palate, which will not be contented with good, substantial, wholesome Food, or with a great deal of superfluous Wealth, more than ever we shall use, or have Occasion for; neither of these being any way necessary towards the true Happiness of Life. What is it, then, that is promised to the Lovers of *Justice* and *Honesty*, under these

these Words, *They shall be filled, or satisfied?* I answer, chiefly these *three* Things, which are all very valuable Blessings.

1. A *Competency* or Sufficiency of outward Blessings.

2. A *Contentment* or Satisfaction of Mind with our Lot and Portion, be it what it will.

3. *An Heart to use and enjoy the Blessings* God bestows upon us, for the several Uses and Occasions of Life. These *three*, and no more, I take to be necessary towards the *Satisfaction* promised in my Text. They deserve a more particular Consideration.

1. The *first* Thing I take to be promised in these Words, *For they shall be filled*, is a *Competency*; that is, such a Portion of the good Things of this Life, as God knows to be requisite for every one's Occasions and Circumstances. This is not alike in all; for as there are several Ranks and Orders, and Degrees among Men, some superior, others inferior; some to command, some to obey; some having a great Charge of Children, and some few or none; some requiring more, some less, towards the honest and decent Discharge of their several Functions; it is not to be understood by this *Competency* of worldly good Things promised to Men of Probity and Honesty, that God will raise them all to the highest Rank of Mankind, and bless them with such Affluence and Abundance, as is requisite for Persons in those highest Stations; tho' it is often seen that *Honesty* and *Diligence* promote Men to Stations of the *first* Rank. (a) *Seest thou a Man diligent in his Business, he shall stand before Kings,*

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(a) Prov. xxii. 29.

he shall not stand before mean Men ; saith Solomon. But this is not the Thing here promised ; it is only promised that *they shall be filled*, which has Reference to their Capacity and Circumstances. A Pint Pot, tho' it holds not so much, is capable of being filled, as well as a Gallon. So when a Man in a lower Sphere has enough to supply his low Occasions, he is as truly filled, and satisfied, as a Prince, or great Man, with a thousand Times his Income, who has likewise usually a thousand Times more Occasion for it.

2. The *second* Thing I take to be promised in these Words, *They shall be filled, or satisfied*, is a Contentment or Satisfaction of Mind with their Circumstances ; for without this there is no outward *Competency* whatsoever can be said to fill or satisfy the Mind : And this is a Blessing no way confined to the more affluent and plentiful Fortunes, but diffused through all ; nay, more frequently to be found in poor Cottages, than in rich Palaces. And a great Blessing it is, when God gives a Man Grace to suit his Mind to his Fortune, and contentedly to acquiesce in his holy Will and Pleasure ; contrary to the Temper of the Covetous and Ambitious, who are never easy under their present Circumstances, but are always restlessly aiming at further and higher Measures of Wealth and Greatness.

3. A *third* Thing necessary for compleating this Promise in my Text, is a Heart to use and enjoy the Blessings God bestows upon us for the several Uses and Occasions of Life ; for without this a *Competency* of outward good Things would be no Blessing, and of no Use : It would be only as if under the Notion of presenting me with a

Sum of Money, one should count out indeed the Money into Bags, and should lock them up in my Chest; but, withal, should put the Key in his own Pocket, and tell me that I should have no Access to it, but by his Leave; and, if my Wants were ever so pressing, that I should not touch one Farthing of it. So that without this *Heart to use our Competency*, we should want what we have, as well as what we have not; consequently could never have our Wants supplied, or our Desires filled and satisfied, which is the Promise in the Text.

So much for the *first* Thing I proposed to consider, namely, what sort of Supply it is which is here promised to just honest Men.

II. I proceed next, as I proposed, to make it out, from Scripture and Reason, that this Promise of a *Competency* shall be made good to the *just, honest Man*.

To begin with *the Text*. It is true there are a great many Interpreters who expound this *filling* or *satisfying*, to relate to spiritual and eternal Blessings; but there is great Reason, both from the Meaning of the Word *χορτάζω*, which signifies *to feed to a Satisfaction of Hunger*, and from the Nature of this *Promise*, being particularly adapted to the Duty of *Justice*, to which it is annexed, to believe that it is a *Competency of outward Blessings* which is here promised. Upon Occasion of this Observation, I am tempted to digress a little, and to say something in general of the Promises annexed to the several Duties in these *Beatitudes*. It has been run away with as a current Notion, that all those Promises are to be resolved into *one*; that they are nothing else

but eternal Life under different Notions and Acceptations; whereas, perhaps, to any one that will enquire more diligently into the Nature of them, they will all appear as distinct as the Duties to which they are annexed, and all of them something immediately resulting from the Nature of that particular Duty to which they are joined. Thus in the *first Beatitude* it is foretold and promised that the *Messiah's* Kingdom, that is, the Church of *Christ*, should consist of Men whose Hearts and Affections were not set on the World; which is a very particular Thing, the same that *St. Paul* observes in these Words, *1 Cor. i. 26. For ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.* And *St. James ii. 5. Hath not God chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom?* In the Promise annexed to the *second Beatitude*, the inward Comforts which follow a State of Penitence are pointed at. In the *third Beatitude*, the quiet and peaceable Enjoyment of what they have, is promised to the *Meek*. In the *fourth Beatitude*, which is that of our Text, a *Competency* is promised to *Honesty*. In the *fifth*, Mercy both from God and Man is promised to the *Merciful*. In the *sixth*, Acquaintance with God and divine Things is promised to *the pure in Heart*. In the *seventh*, the Honour of being owned as the Children of God is annexed to the *Peacemakers*. And in the *last*, proportionable Degrees of Happiness in Heaven are promised to them who suffer for *Christ*, or their Duty here upon Earth. I have not Time to prove particularly the Truth of this Observation, only in general it is much more probable

bable that our Saviour, who uses not to be guilty of Tautologies, would not have *eight* Times on End repeated the same Thing; besides, that the Expressions are all different, according to the different Relation they have to the Duties enjoined: Particularly in this Promise here, our Saviour seems to obviate an Objection which they tacitly harboured in their Breasts; as if, being but poor themselves, they knew not how to furnish out sufficiently for the Charge and Expences of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, without invading the Estates of other Men. To prevent this Conceit, our Saviour acquaints them, that if they studied *Justice* and *Honesty*, they should not need to fear Want; for that God would supply them with whatever was necessary or convenient for them.

And now to shew you that this Doctrine is countenanced both by *Scripture* and *Reason*, I shall briefly draw an Argument from both; and *first* from *Scripture*. The *Old Testament* abounds in Promises of this kind, which are all very applicable to the Gospel-times, especially when the Church is not under Persecution, but has Kings for her Nursing-fathers, and Queens for her Nursing-mothers. I shall quote some of the plainest to this Purpose. The *Psalmist* says, Psal. xxxvii. 3. *Trust in the Lord and do Good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* What is this, but the same with my Text, *They shall be filled*? So Ver. 25. of the same Psalm, *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging Bread.* And Solomon, Prov. xiii. 25. *The Righteous eateth to the satisfying of his Soul; but the Belly of the Wicked shall want.* Many such
Obser-

Observations doth Solomon make in that Book ; as Chap. iii. 33. *The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the Wicked : But he bleſſeth the Habitation of the Juſt.* And Chap. x. 3. *The Lord will not ſuffer the Soul of the Righteous to famiſh : But he caſteth away the Subſtance of the Wicked.* And Chap. xiii.

11. *Wealth gotten by Vanity ſhall be diminifhed ; but he that gathereth by Labour ſhall increaſe.* *Wealth gotten by Vanity*, that is, by Fraud and diſhoneſt Courſes ; which is ſet in Oppoſition to gathering by honeſt Labour and Induſtry. I ſhall quote but one Paſſage more out of the Old Teſtament ; it is Iſa. xxxiii. 15. *He that walketh righteouſly and ſpeaketh uprightly, he that deſpiſeth the Gain of Oppreſſions, and ſhaketh his Hands from holding of Bribes, that ſtoppeth his Ears from hearing of Blood, and ſhutteth his Eyes from ſeeing Evil ; he ſhall dwell on high : His Place of Defence ſhall be the Munitions of Rocks, Bread ſhall be given him, his Waters ſhall be ſure.* Where, by *Bread and Water*, or Viſtuals and Drink, is ſignified this Competency of outward Bleſſings ; and by the *Munitions of Rocks for his Place of Defence*, is ſignified his Shelter and Security.

Now that theſe ſame Bleſſings belong to juſt honeſt Men under the Goſpel too, will appear, both from the Nature and Reason of the Thing, as we ſhall preſently ſee ; and from the like Argument uſed by our Saviour and the Apoſtles in the New Teſtament. *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and the Righteouſneſs thereof ; and all theſe Things ſhall be added unto you*, Mat. vi. 33. And Heb. xiii. 5. *Let your Converſation be without Covetouſneſs ; and be content with ſuch Things as ye have : For he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee,*

nor forsake thee. He draws an Argument from such a Promise as we have been speaking of in the *Old Testament*, and applies it in the *New*. And by the same Logick, or Way of reasoning, we may argue, that these Promises I just now quoted out of the *Old Testament*, and all the other general Promises there made, will be likewise performed in the *New*. I could bring many more Quotations to this Purpose, but these are sufficient to prove what I brought them for, and something more; as containing not only Promises of a *Competency* to the righteous honest Persons *themselves*, but likewise a Blessing to *their House* and *Posterity*.

And as the holy Scriptures are plain on this Subject, so, if we examine the Matter by the Rules of sober right Reason, we shall find it will teach us the same Doctrine, that *Justice* and *Honesty* in our Dealings is the surest Way to guard against Want, and to enjoy this *Competency* promised in my Text. For the better imprinting of which Truth in your Minds and Memories, there are these few Things I would briefly offer to your Consideration.

I. The *first* is, that *Justice* and *Honesty* contribute very much towards the Improvement of all the Faculties of the Soul; I mean, that it clears up the Understanding from that Mist which crooked dark Designs are apt to raise in it; that it preserves the Rectitude of the Will, by freeing it from those sinister Biasses which dishonest Designs give it; and that it keeps up a Regularity in the Affections, by suffering no sinister Design of Lusts or By-ends to disorder them. It likewise preserves the Conscience from all Damps of Grief

Grief and Melancholy, which are the natural and infallible Consequences of unjust Designs and Actions; and by this Improvement of the Faculties, it makes a Man so much the abler to discern, and so much the more chearful, active, and diligent to mind his Business. *Light is sown for the Righteous, says the Psalmist, and Gladness for the upright in Heart, Psal. xcvi. 11.*

2. As the *honest* Man takes the best Course to improve his *natural* Faculties, so he is the best disposed to procure and receive the Assistances of *supernatural* Grace; for being conscious to himself of his sincere upright Intentions, he can with good Assurance recommend his Affairs to God's Blessing and Direction: Whereas the dishonest fraudulent Man dares not call for God's Blessing upon his wicked Designs, or, if he does, he knows it is in vain to expect it. Now a Man who believes that he has God of his Side, acts with another sort of Life and Chearfulness, and with another Vigour and Resolution, than he who knows he is alone in what he does; and that he may rather expect God's Curse than his Blessing. *The Eyes of the Lord, says the Psalmist, are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Cry. The Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil, Psal. xxxiv. 15, 16.*

3. The honest Man is most likely to be kept in Business and Employ; for all Men, whatever they may be themselves, love to find Honesty in those they deal with, and hate to be tricked and cheated. This is so true an Observation, that the greatest Knaves and Cheats have no other Way to get into Business, but by counterfeiting Honesty, and pretending to be what they are not: And if they
happen

happen to be discovered, as it is a thousand to one but that they will, they are presently blown upon, and discountenanced, and every one is cautious of having any further Dealings with such a Person.

4. If the honest Man wants Credit, which is a great Furtherance in worldly Business, how easy a Thing is it for him, after Experience of his honest Courses, to find enough, more than he is willing to make use of? Whereas the dishonest Man, so soon as he is known to be what he is, sinks in his Credit, and carries on his Affairs very heavily without it.

5. The upright honest Man *walketh surely*, as *Solomon* observes, *Prov. x. 9*. He is not afraid of the Detection of his Servants, or the Confessions of his Accomplices and Associates; when Inquiries after Bribery, Corruption, Villany, and Misdemeanors of all sorts are ever so strict, he is not daunted or cast down, as being conscious to himself of his Uprightness and Innocence: Whereas the unjust Man fears every Thing, and is glad, when detected, to fly from *Justice*, or to disgorge a great part of his ill-gotten Wealth, that he may redeem the rest, or perhaps may buy off his Life, which he has justly forfeited by his Crimes.

6. In all good Governments, such as understand their own Interest, the upright honest Man stands much fairer for Preferment than the Knave. *Righteous Lips are the Delight of Kings*, says *Solomon*, *and they love him that speaketh right*, *Prov. xvi. 13*.

7. The honest Man has this great Advantage, that the more and the longer he is known, so much the better is he liked and trusted; so that
his

his Reputation and his Wealth have a gradual Increase, as he comes to be better acquainted with Mankind, and they with him: He wants but a fair Introduction into Business to make his Fortune, and afterwards his Honesty makes its own Way, and will carry him through: Whereas it is quite otherwise with the dishonest Man, his Knavery trips up his Heels, and it is but for a present Turn, at least for a very short Time, that his Politicks are calculated. This likewise Solomon observed: *The Integrity of the Upright shall guide them; but the Perverseness of Transgressors shall destroy them*, Prov. xi. 3. And again, *The Lip of Truth shall be established for ever: But a lying Tongue is but for a Moment*, Prov. xii. 19.

8. *Lastly*, It is observed of ill-gotten Wealth, that it seldom thrives. Sometimes the Knave himself is detected, and fleeced; sometimes his crooked Ways engage him in endless Law-Suits, which consume and exhaust him; sometimes with high Bribes he is obliged to buy his Peace; sometimes his Accomplices and he fall out about parting the unrighteous Mammon: In short, there are infinite Ways of Providence, by which Knaves are detected, and honest Men righted. Then whereas all Men are apt to pity an honest Man if he falls into Troubles through Misfortune; on the other hand, they have no Compassion on a Knave; he commonly sinks under it, while the honest Man creeps out. (a) *A just Man, saith Solomon, falleth seven Times, and riseth up again: But the Wicked shall fall into Mischiefe*. But if the dishonest Man escapes in his own Time, his ill-gotten Estate seldom thrives with his Heirs.

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(a) Prov. xxiv. 16.

It is true of him what Solomon says, *An Inheritance may be gotten hastily at the Beginning, (and if hastily, seldom honestly) but the End thereof shall not be blest*, Prov. xvi. 21.

I find Time will not allow my answering of Objections against this Doctrine, or the drawing of Inferences from it; and therefore, rather than encroach upon your Patience, I shall here conclude. Now God blefs what ye have heard, and preserve you from all Biass of Injustice, and keep your Hearts and Minds in an even and righteous Temper, not only in Matters of Judgment, but in all the Actions of your Life. A Temper which we have all Reason to believe will be attended with all sorts of spiritual and temporal Blessings in *Christ Jesus*. *To him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N IX.

M A T. V. 7.

Blessed are the Merciful: For they shall obtain Mercy.

The First Sermon on this Text.

IN these Words our blessed Lord goes on to undeceive his Hearers, as to their carnal Opinions and Expectations of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and to take off the wrong Preparations and Dispositions of their Minds for it; as if he had said, “Your Hearts being full of
 “Expectation of great worldly Conquests, ye
 “think of nothing but to knock all down before
 “you, to kill, and slay, and plunder, and by the
 “*Messiah's* Help to call for Fire from Heaven,
 “and to bring a vast deal of Misery and Desolation on Mankind. But ye are exceedingly mistaken in the *Messiah*, and in the Nature of his
 “Kingdom: He comes in Love, not in Hatred
 “to Men; he is so far from wronging any Man,
 “that he comes on purpose to do them all the
 “Good they are capable of. And if ye intend
 “to join yourselves to him as his Disciples and
 “Followers, or to have any Share in his Kingdom, ye must be of another Spirit and Temper, and, instead of hard-hearted cruel Designs
 “against

“ against Mankind, must be most tenderly and
 “ compassionately affected towards them, and
 “ ready to help and relieve them in all their Di-
 “ stresses, Wants, and Necessities; and in so do-
 “ ing, ye shall find Mercy both at the Hands of
 “ God and Man.”

From the Words thus explained, there are these two Things will come properly under our Consideration.

I. The Virtue of *Mercifulness* here recommended; *Blessed are the Merciful.*

II. The Promise annexed; *For they shall obtain Mercy.*

As to the *First*, the Virtue of *Mercifulness*, it is a Duty of very large Dimensions, as taking in all the Compassion and Kindness we can shew to our Neighbour in Distress; and those Distresses being infinitely various and numerous, make this Duty to be of a vast Compass and Extent. It differs from the foregoing Virtue of *Justice*, in that it is conversant about such Duties as our Neighbour has no strict Right to, such as he may indeed pray for and desire, but can't exact or require, by any Laws of God or Man, as peculiarly his Due. I say as peculiarly his Due, for they are no otherwise due to him, than to all other Men in Misery and Distress; it is true, we are answerable to God for this Duty of *Mercifulness*, but, for the Duties of strict Justice, we are not only answerable to God, but likewise to Man.

In describing this Duty of *Mercifulness*, I shall first consider the *Objects* of it; then the *Acts*, and,

lastly, the Manner in which they are to be performed.

I. As to the Objects of *Mercy*, in general they are *our Neighbours*, considered in their *miserable Circumstances*. In which Respect we may consider them chiefly in these *six or seven Capacities*.

1. Our Neighbour *erring*.
2. Our Neighbour *offending*.
3. Our Neighbour *persecuted*.
4. Our Neighbour *in Want*.
5. Our Neighbour *in Pain, or Sicknefs*.
6. Our Neighbour *under Crazednefs, Madnefs, or Melancholy*.
7. Our Neighbour *unfortunate by the Loss of good Friends, or Untowardlinefs of bad Relations*.

In all which Respects he is an *Object of Mercy*; and not only an Object of Mercy when actually involved in any of these unhappy Circumstances, that by that means we may help to extricate him out of them; but likewise when he is in Danger of falling into them; that so his Danger and Misery may be prevented.

(1.) Our Neighbour *erring* is a great Object of our *Mercy* and *Compassion*, especially if the Errors are such as are apt to be attended with dangerous Consequences, either as to his *Soul*, or *Body*, or *Reputation*, or *Estate*: And therefore if we can, either by timely Precaution, and Providence, guard our Neighbour against such Company, and Books, as would infect him with vicious Principles, tending to the Corruption of his Mind and Manners, or against such Courses as may prove destructive of his Health or Estate, or pernicious to his Reputation: All these are great Exercises of
of

of Mercy and Compassion toward him. Or if after he is unhappily involved we can contribute towards the extricating him out of them, the Mercy is still so much the greater, as he was in the greater Danger of being ensnared and damned thereby. Jam. v. 19, 20. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bide a Multitude of Sins.*

(2.) Our Neighbour offending is a great Object of our *Mercy and Compassion*; it is true, in some Sense he is rather the Object of our *Resentment and Indignation*, as bringing a Scandal on his Profession, and Disgrace to his Kindred, Teachers, and Associates in Life or Religion; yet if we view him in another Aspect, I mean as he is enslaved to vicious Habits, and as those Habits commonly grow up into a *second Nature*, and are extreme difficult to shake off, and consequently as the offending Person is in the greatest Danger of final Perdition, if in so dangerous Circumstances he should be abandoned of his spiritual Physicians; we shall soon be convinced that a Man starving for want of Bread, or languishing under a mortal Distemper, is not a greater Object of Compassion. For tho' these Calamities are more visible to the Senses, and consequently more apt to move to Commiseration, yet the Danger of temporal Death, which is the Effect of the one, is not near so formidable as that of eternal Misery, which is the Consequence of the other.

This I speak with relation to Offences against God; but there is another Sense in which our offending Neighbour is an Object of Mercy, and

that is as he has injured ourselves, and is the proper Object of our Pardon.

(3.) Another great Object of *Mercy* is our Neighbour *under Persecution*. The Spirit of Persecution is of all Things the most opposite to this merciful Temper here recommended, and the most opposite indeed to the Spirit of *Christianity* in general. And if our Saviour told his Disciples^(a), when they were for praying for Fire from Heaven to consume the *Samaritans*, that *they knew not what manner of Spirit they were of*; how much more may we say so of them who of their own Accord kindle the Fires of Persecution upon Earth, without waiting the Decision of Heaven? And therefore our Neighbour *under Persecution* is a great Object of Mercy, that we may contrive to extricate him out of it, or if he is but in Danger of it, that we may contrive to obviate and prevent it.

(4.) Our Neighbour *in Want* is a great Object of *Mercy*, especially if he wants not only *the Comforts* and desirable Conveniencies, but even the *Necessaries* of Life; and the more there is of *his Misfortune*, and the less of *his Fault* in these Things, he is still the greater Object of Mercy and Compassion. Many such Objects the World abounds in, God so contriving it to exercise the Patience of some, and the Charity of others.

(5.) Our Neighbour *in Pain or Sickness* is a great Object of *Mercy*, and calls for our Compassion in visiting him, and comforting him under, or helping him out of his Affliction.

(6.) Our Neighbour also *crazed in his Understanding, mad, or melancholy*, or that has his
Thoughts

: (a) Luke ix. 55.

Thoughts all carried towards one Whim or Fancy, being utterly ignorant or insensible of other Things, is a great *Object* of *Mercy and Compassion*. It is really a lamentable Sight to see the miserable Effects of a disordered Brain, or Vapours, or Melancholy; what Discontent, Foolishness, or Uneasiness, they cause to the Person himself; and what Trouble and Danger to all about him.

(7.) There are several other Calamities incident to human Nature, not reducible under any of these Heads; such as *Loss of Friends*, *Alienation of Affection in Husband or Wife*, *Misfortunes of Children or near Relations*, *Banishment*, *Captivity*, *Servitude*; *the being unhappily yoked with Persons of atheistical Principles*, *loose Lives*, *imperious, jealous, passionate, or discontented Tempers*, and many other Miseries of Life; for it would be endless, and impossible, indeed, to enumerate all.

But these are enough; for from a Mixture and Composition of those bitter Ingredients, there is an infinite Number of particular Cases do arise, which render Men Objects of *Mercy and Compassion*.

II. But next to the *Objects*, let us now consider the *Acts of Mercy*, that so we may the better understand wherein this Virtue of *Mercifulness* doth consist. Of these something may be proper to be considered in general, and something relating to the particular Objects of *Mercy*, about which they are conversant. As to the Acts of *Mercy* in general, they are chiefly these.

I. A Consideration of the miserable Circumstances of others. For there is a sort of Men in the World who mind no Body but themselves, nor are in the least affected with the miserable

Circumstances of their Neighbour: Perhaps, indeed, they cannot help being moved a little with the Sight of a very miserable Object, if they should accidentally come upon it; this is either an Infirmary, or a little Remainder of good Nature: But they take Care to keep their Minds, as much as ever they can, from the Consideration of such miserable Objects. For, as the Prophet *Amos* describes them, Chap. vi. 3. *They put far away the evil Day; they lie upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the Stall; they chant to the Sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick. They drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments: But they are not grieved for the Affliction of Joseph.* An elegant Description of such as give up themselves totally to their own Ease, Luxury, Pleasure, and Indolency, and have no Thought or Consideration of the Miseries of others. It is certain this Temper is too natural a Fruit of Prosperity, and therefore we shall do well to watch and rectify it. When we sit down to a plentiful Table, let us force a Reflection on *their* sad Circumstances who suffer for Hunger; and when we are warm cloathed, let us consider them who have scarce any Rags to cover their Nakedness; or if we find our Minds hard to be brought to such mortifying Considerations, let us now and then make a Visit to our poorest Neighbours, and help our Imagination and Consideration with the Sight and Sense of their poor and unhappy Circumstances.

2. Next to the Consideration of our Neighbour's Misery, it is the Part of the *merciful* Man

to stir up his Bowels of Compassion. These inward Bowels are the most essential Part of *Mercy*. This is in Opposition to a strange, selfish, unconcerned Temper, which is hardened against our Neighbour's Calamity, and immediately turns away the Eyes and Thoughts from the Consideration of it; like the *Priest* and the *Levite* in the Parable, (b) *Who seeing the poor wounded Man, sheared off from him, and passed by on the other Side of the Way.* Or like them whom St. *James* describes, whose Compassion evaporates all in good Words to a Brother or Sister that is naked and destitute of daily Food. (c) *Depart in Peace, be you warmed, and filled; but give them none of those Things that are needful to the Body.* Certainly if the inward Bowels are once thoroughly moved, we shall be excited to use our hearty Endeavours towards the Relief of the miserable Object.

3. Those Endeavours will break out in our Prayers to God for them, in our own exercising our Charity and Beneficence, according to our Ability, and in stirring up or procuring others to do what we are not sufficient for alone of ourselves.

So much for the Acts of *Mercy* in general. But if we come to Particulars, they are very various, according as the Objects of *Mercy* do variously present, and we have Ability and Opportunity of bringing Help and Relief. Thus

(1.) Where the Object of *Mercy* is our Neighbour *in Error*, there are many Ways of exercising this Grace of *Mercy* towards him; for perhaps we ourselves are capable of dealing with him, and convincing him; or if we are not ca-

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pable

(b) Luke x. 31, 32.

(c) James ii. 16.

pable of it ourselves, we know and can help him to some other that is, or to some Books in which the Truth, as to those Points in which he errs, is discreetly handled: We can watch the most convenient Times of addressing him, and exercise abundance of Patience and Condescension with him. For Errors in the Understanding, especially in Matters of Religion, are as difficult to be handled, and must be as gently touched, as the tenderest Sores in the most sensible Parts of the Body.

(2.) And there is no less Difficulty in managing our Neighbour *offending*; for there we have to do with inveterate evil Habits, and the headstrong Inclinations of Men to Vice, which biases their Judgment, and utterly indispose them for admitting or following good Counsel. What can the most *merciful* Disposition do in this Case, but be earnest in Prayer at the Throne of Grace, and improve all Advantages of good Counsel, good Books, good Providences, evil Consequences of Vice, and good ones of Virtue; to convince, persuade, surprize, or by all Means recover the Transgressor from the Evil of his Ways?

But if the Offence is not only against God, but against ourselves, there is something more to be done; for then the proper Act of *Mercy* is to curb all Thoughts of Revenge, and to dispose ourselves to forgive him, as we expect Forgiveness of Almighty God.

(3.) As to the *third* Object of *Mercy*, our Neighbour *persecuted*, the proper Acts of *Mercy* relating to it are, to contribute what we can, by propagating Principles of Moderation, to prevent or remove all persecuting Methods, and to set forward

ward the restoring of Men in the Spirit of Meekness, and particularly within our own Sphere to exercise a gentle and equitable Command over our own Children, Servants, and Slaves, with Bowels of Compassion towards their Frailties and Infirmities, and remote from all Suspicion of Fierceness or Cruelty; and in our several Stations to help to rescue the Oppressed out of the Hands of his Persecutors.

(4.) As to the *fourth* Object of *Mercy*, our Neighbour *in Want*, there are many Acts relating to it; for, as the Prophet *Isaiah* saith, (d) *The Liberal deviseth liberal Things*.

It is a great Act of *Mercy* in the way of publick Charity, to provide Receptacles and Entertainment for poor Widows and Orphans, for aged and infirm Persons, for sick, and wounded, and mad, and all the other Wants and Necessities of Life; or, in the way of private Charity, if we do any Act of Bounty or Hospitality towards the Poor, or Strangers, or others in Distress, if it be ever so small, upon a good Account; or if, with an express Intention to furnish out those Charities, (e) we are either more diligent in our Purchases, or more frugal in our Expences, or more self-denied in our Appetites; or if what we can't spare in Cost, through the streightness of our Circumstances, we make up in good Will, Service, and Attendance, (f) performed for God's Sake to Objects of Charity and *Mercy*; or if, at least, we can help and recommend them to the Charity of others, which may be more beneficial and serviceable to them than our own; if our Interest, Credit, and good Word can relieve them, where
our

(d) Is. xxxii. 8.

(e) Eph. iv. 28.

(f) 2 Cor. viii. 12.

our Purse can't reach to do it; these, and many other, are proper Acts of *Mercy* to those that are in Want.

(5.) Our comfortable Letters and Visits to our Neighbours in Pain or Sicknes, our sympathizing with them, our relieving them by our Advice or Means, or Tendance, or Assistance; our helping them out in their Affairs and Business, which suffers through their Indisposition; are all proper Expressions of *Mercy* to that sort of Objects.

(6.) *Lastly*, The Exercise of Patience, Humility, Sympathy, Love, Prudence and Discretion to all People, who are either crazed in their Understanding, or mourning under Affliction, or any way discontented, and uneasy in their Circumstances; the suggesting any thing that may make them easier in their Minds, or doing any thing to make them more comfortable in their Circumstances, or at least to divert and put off their Melancholy, and to exhilarate them with innocent Mirth and Chearfulness; are all proper Acts of *Mercy* to our Neighbour in such Distress.

In short, as the Apostle advises, *Gal. vi. 2. Bear ye one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ.* As there are many Burdens too heavy and intolerable indeed to *one*, which yet, by a Communication of Help, are easy; so it is the Will of our Master *Christ*, that by our Sympathy with, and Assistance of one another in our Distresses and Afflictions, we *Christians* should be mutual Comforts and Supports to one another in all our uneasy and adverse Circumstances.

Having

Having spoke of *the Objects*, and *the Acts* of *Mercy*, it remains that I say something, in the last Place, of *the Manner in which those Acts are to be performed*; and this I shall do only in the general, Time not permitting our Consideration of the Particulars relating to it.

1. *First*, then, all Acts of *Mercy* should be done with a *Readiness* and *Forwardness of Mind*; the Life of them is the good Grace and Chearfulness with which they are performed: What comes with an ill Will, and, as it were, extorted by Importunity, as it loses its Gracefulness with Men, so it is no way acceptable to God; (g) *For God loveth a chearful Giver*. This Readiness and Forwardness of Mind to Acts of Charity and Beneficence, St. Paul commends highly in the *Corinthians*; that they needed no asking, but were ready of their own Accord, and forward, and exemplary to others, 2 Cor. ix. 1. *As touching the ministering to the Saints*, saith he, *it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know the Forwardness of your Mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a Year ago; and your Zeal hath provoked very many.*

2. Acts of *Mercy* should be done with *Modesty* and *Humility*, both to prevent Pride in the Giver, and Shame and Reproach in the Receiver. As to this, there follows an excellent Advice in this same Sermon, Chap. vi. 1. about *not doing our Alms before Men to be seen of them*, &c.

3. Let our Works of *Mercy* proceed purely from a *kind* and *merciful*, not from a selfish and mercenary Temper. Our Saviour designed that *Christian Beneficence* should in this be distinguished

guished from the Beneficence of the World; *theirs* is with an Eye to their own temporal Interest, and with an Expectation to receive the same, or equivalent Kindnesses again: But the good *Christian's* Beneficence is with a pure Eye to God, without any Hopes of Reward from Man.

(b) *If ye love them who love you, says our Saviour, what thank have ye? For Sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do Good to them which do Good to you, what thank have ye? For Sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? But do Good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your Reward shall be great. Not but that there may and ought to be a Communication of Civility, good Neighbourhood, and all friendly Offices among Men; but this is not properly the Duty of Mercy, which we are now upon, which considers our Neighbour only as in Misery, not as he may repay us, and be serviceable to us again.*

4. Let our Works of *Mercy* be done readily, without Delay. *Say not to thy Neighbour, whose Wants are pressing, Go and come again, and to Morrow I will give thee, when thou hast it by thee, Prov. iii. 28.*

5. Let our Works of *Mercy*, as to the Measure of them, be done bountifully and liberally, according to our Condition and Circumstances. Sometimes, indeed, a small Bounty is a great one, because, tho' small in itself, it is great to them who give it, there being but little left.
(i) *Like the Widow's two Mites; but much greater Things*

(b) Luke vi. 32.

(i) Mark xii. 42.

Things are expected of the Rich: For they are charged to be (k) *rich in good Works*.

6. Let us perform Acts of *Mercy* with Minds full of Gratitude to God; who gives us both the Ability and the Will to do them. *David* gives us a notable Example of this Grace, 1 *Chron.* xxix. 13. where he accompanies his own and his People's Gifts to the Temple with this grateful Acknowledgment; *Now therefore our God we thank thee, says he, and praise thy glorious Name. But who am I, and what is my People, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this Sort? For all Things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.*

7. Lastly, Let us perform our Acts of *Mercy* to *Christ's* Members, as to *Christ* himself; I mean, let us have an Eye to him, and regard him in his afflicted or poor Members. For he has told us, that (l) *Whosoever shall give a Cup of cold Water to any one in the Name of a Disciple, that is, upon the Account of his Relation to him, he shall in no wise lose his Reward.* This I take to be one of the best Ingredients in our Acts of *Mercy*, and it will be acknowledged in the great Day of Accounts, and rewarded accordingly, as our Saviour himself acquaints us, *Mat.* xxv. 40. where the Acts of *Mercy* and *Charity* shewed to his distressed Brethren are interpreted as shewed to himself. *Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

I have now given you a Description of the *Merciful*, and should next have proceeded to the Consideration of the Promise annexed, *For they shall*

(k) 1 Tim. vi. 18.

(l) Mat. x. 42.

shall obtain Mercy; but Time preventing me, I shall refer this latter Part of the Text to another Opportunity. God of his infinite Mercy bless what we have heard, that it may take root in our Hearts, and bring forth abundant Fruit in our Lives and Conversations, to his Glory, and our eternal Comfort, through the Mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.

S E R M O N X.

M A T. V. 7.

Blessed are the Merciful: For they shall obtain Mercy.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

HA V I N G in a former Discourse given you a Description of the Virtue of *Mercifulness* here recommended, from these Words, *Blessed are the Merciful*; I proceed now to the Promise annexed, *For they shall obtain Mercy*. For understanding of which Promise in its due Latitude, I must desire you to observe, that it extends to all sorts of *Mercies*, both those of this Life, and of that which is to come; as I shall prove by and by from other plain Passages of the holy Scriptures.

I begin with the *Mercies* and *Blessings* of this Life, and these I shall distinguish into external and internal, and shew you that they are both promised to, and conferred upon the *merciful* Man.

I. *First*, As for external *Mercies* of all sorts, the holy Scripture promises them very fully to the *Merciful*, as by an Induction of Particulars will appear.

1. A Deliverance out of Trouble is promised, Isa. lviii. 10. *If thou draw out thy Soul to the Hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul; then shall thy Light rise in Obscurity: That is, thy Adversity shall be turned into Prosperity; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy Soul in Drought, and make fat thy Bones, and thou shalt be like a watered Garden, and like a Spring of Water, whose Waters fail not.* And Psal. cxii. 4. *Unto the Upright there ariseth Light in the Darknes:* And to shew what he means there by the Upright, it follows immediately; *He is gracious, and full of Compassion, and righteous.* And Psal. xli. 1. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will deliver him in Time of Trouble.*

2. God's Blessing and Success is promised to all his Labours and Undertakings, Deut. xv. 7, 10. *If there be among you a poor Man of one of thy Brethren, within any of thy Gates, in thy Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor shut thine Hand from thy poor Brother———* And Ver. 10. *Thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved, when thou givest unto him: Because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine Hand unto.*

3. The staying off of Troubles, and lengthening of our Tranquillity, is another Fruit of Mercy and Charity; and therefore the Prophet Daniel thus advises King Nebuchadnezzar, at that Time threatened with great Calamities, Dan. iv. 27. *Wherefore, O King, let my Counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy Sins by Righteousness, and thine Iniquities by shewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy Tranquillity.*

4. Plenty is likewise promised to the Merciful. *He that gives to the Poor, saith Solomon, shall not lack, Prov. xxviii. 27. He that hath Pity upon the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again, Prov. xix. 17. The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself, Prov. xi. 25. And Prov. iii. 9. Honour the Lord with thy Substance, and with the first Fruits of all thine Increase: So shall thy Barns be filled with Plenty, and thy Presses shall burst out with new Wine.*

5. Honour is likewise promised him, *Psal. cxii. 9. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the Poor; his Righteousness endureth for ever; his Horn shall be exalted with Honour. And in the same Psalm it is promised of the same charitable and righteous Man, that He shall be had in everlasting Remembrance.*

6. Deliverance from Enemies is likewise promised him, *Psal. xli. 2. Speaking of him that considereth the Poor, The Lord will preserve him, saith the Psalmist, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth, and thou wilt not deliver him into the Will of his Enemies.*

7. God's Comforts are promised him in his Sickness. *The Lord will strengthen him upon the Bed of Languishing: Thou wilt make all his Bed in his Sickness:* Speaking of the same charitable Man, *Psal. xli. 3.*

8. There is a Blessing promised to his Posterity, *Psal. xxxvii. 26. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his Seed is blessed.*

9. But, more particularly, the Promise in my Text, in so far as it relates to these temporal Blessings, points at the Mercy which merciful Men

shall meet with both from God and Man, whenever they come to be in Distress, and want it: Such as Relief in Poverty and Famine, and *Mercy* at the Hands of Enemies; God's Providence so ordering Matters, that *merciful* Persons, and *merciful* States and Communities, are mercifully treated in their Distresses and Calamities. And, on the other Hand, *unmerciful* Persons and Communities are in their Turn treated, by way of Repisal, with the like Hard-heartedness they shew to others.

II. So much for external *Mercies*; the Promise is no less true as to internal ones: Such as, 1. An Openness of Heart, which I take to be a great Blessing, as well as a great Virtue; for it gives a Man the Enjoyment of what he has of the World: See Eccl. v. 19. *Every Man to whom God hath given Riches and Wealth, and hath given him Power to eat thereof, and to take his Portion; and to rejoice in his Labour, this is the Gift of God.* Whereas a penurious narrow Spirit, as it deprives others of the Comforts of our Charity, and obstructs all good Offices towards them; so it deprives ourselves of the Use and Benefit of those good Things which we have in our Possession. 2. Another great inward Blessing attending the *merciful* Man, is a Contentment and Satisfaction with his own State and Condition; for he who is bountiful to others, is certainly delivered from those anxious and solicitous Cares, and from those troublesome, angry, and uneasy Resentments, which attend the covetous, discontented Wretch. 3. The *merciful* Man is likewise happy in being delivered from the cruel and uneasy Resentments of Revenge, a Passion, which, of all
other

other, preys most upon the Person in whose Breast it resides. 4. The *merciful* Man has the Pleasure of all his Neighbour's Blessings as well as his own; that Love and Compassion which reigns in his Heart toward his Neighbour, giving him a solid and real Satisfaction in the Ease of their Calamities, as if it were the Ease of his own. 5. He has likewise the unspeakable Comfort of a good Conscience in all his Dealings towards his Neighbour, which is like the Blessing of Health within, occasioning an inward Tranquillity of Mind, which is the most comfortable of all earthly Blessings. 6. God has expressly annexed the Promise of Pardon of Sin to this *merciful* Temper, Mat. vi. 14. *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.* And our Lord has taught us to pray for the Pardon of our Sins, only upon Condition of our pardoning the Trespases committed against us. *Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* These are all first-Rate Blessings, such as are incomparably beyond the external ones. But there is one behind, which even exceeds them, and that is,

III. The Promise and Gift of eternal Life to the *Merciful*. This is the great Promise, to which it is but Reason that all the rest give Place, and in which they are all eminently fulfilled. *Sell that ye have, saith our Saviour, Luke xii. 33. and give Alms: Provide yourselves Bags which wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth.* And again, Chap. xvi. 9. *I say unto you, make to yourselves Friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive*

you into everlasting Habitations. And the great Promise annexed to that Charge given to the Rich to be charitable, 1 *Tim.* vi. 17. is this, *Laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.* This is that plentiful Harvest which shall reward the plentiful Sowing. This is the good Measure heaped up, pressed down and running over, which shall be repay'd to the charitable Giver. The same Reward too is promised to him who is *merciful* in forgiving, as well as in giving. *Condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven,* Luke vi. 37.

From all which, and many more Passages of Scripture, it is plain, that many Promises of temporal, spiritual, and eternal Blessings, are made to the *Merciful*; but the great Doubt is, concerning the Performance, especially of the temporal Promises. For, one would think, to weigh the Thing in the Balance of carnal Reason, that one great Part of *Mercifulness*, I mean *Bounty to the Poor*, should rather impoverish than enrich Men, as withdrawing so much from the Heap of their earthly Treasure. Yet both *Scripture* and *Experience* teach us the quite contrary Doctrine, namely, that Charity doth not impoverish, but sanctifies the rest, and brings God's Blessing upon all that we have. Like the Widow's Oil, which still increased and multiplied, as long as it was poured out; or like living Fountains, which the more they are drawn, the Water flows both more plentifully, and more clear. Perhaps this may be a Mystery in Morals; and why should there not be Mysteries in them, as well as in Matters of Faith? Yet, for removing your Doubts and Scruples

ples in this Matter, I shall enquire a little into the Reasonableness of this Doctrine, after I have given you a few Examples of the Truth of it, taken out of the holy Scriptures. *Abraham* and the Patriarchs were Men of great Charity and Hospitality, and God abundantly blessed them with Wealth and Plenty. *Job*, the richest Man in all the *East*, was a Man of noted Mercy and Charity. *I delivered the Poor*, says he, *that cried, and the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet I was to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor,* Job xxix. 12. And again, Chap. xxxi. 16. *If I have withheld the Poor from their Desire, or have caused the Eyes of the Widow to fail, or have eaten my Morsel alone, and the Fatherless have not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of Cloathing, or any poor without Covering; if his Loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the Fleece of my Sheep: Then let mine Arm fall from my Shoulder Blade, and mine Arm be broken from the Bone.* But perhaps ye may be apt to object, that *Job's* Charity did not keep him out of Trouble; that this rich Man lost all, and became poor to a Proverb; so that we say, *As poor as Job* to this Day. I confess it; and I deny not but that all temporal Rewards and Promises must give Place to more valuable Blessings. If God had a Mind, in order to the trying of *Job's* Patience, and the improving and exercising all his other Virtues, to bring Affliction upon him; this being for his greater Good, can be no Diminution of the Promise. But behold the End; God restored him to

more flourishing Circumstances than before, and brought him out of all his Troubles, with Wealth and Honour. But to give you two or three more Instances. In the 17th Chapter of the first Book of *Kings*, we have an Account of a poor Widow of *Sarepta*, who, tho' in great Poverty herself, kept the Prophet *Elijah*, and entertained him at her House, during the whole Time of a very long Famine: And we find there how abundantly the Lord recompenced her, by miraculously preserving and increasing her Meal and Oil, wherewith her Family was nourished; besides the restoring her Son to Life, and other Blessings to her and her House, from the Prophet's good Company. Again, in the second Book of *Kings*, we have the History of the charitable *Shunamite*, who lodged and entertained the Prophet *Elisha*, with abundance of notable Rewards of her Charity, in the Gift of a Son after her long Barrenness; in the restoring her Son to Life, after he was dead; in forewarning her of, and so guarding her against an approaching Famine; and in recovering her House and Lands, which had been lost during her Absence. I shall add but one Instance in the *New Testament*. Ye know the History of *Cornelius*, *Acts* x. how miraculously he was brought over to the *Christian* Faith; it was the Consequence of his Prayers and Alms: For the first Description we have of him is, that *He was a devout Man, one that feared God with all his House, who gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God alway*. And then, Ver. 4. the Angel tells him that *his Prayers and his Alms were come up for a Memorial before God*; upon which he is immediately directed to send for *Peter*, who was to instruct him in the

Christian Faith. Several other Instances might be given of *Mercy* shewed to the *Merciful*; but these are enough to confirm the Doctrine of my Text, as far as Examples will do it.

As for other Reasons of the Promise in my Text, I shall but offer at a very few, that we may have Time to apply this Doctrine to our own State and Circumstances.

1. It is most agreeable, both to the *Wisdom*, *Justice*, and *Goodness* of God, that *Mercy* should be the Portion of the *merciful* Man. (1.) It is agreeable to his *Wisdom*, by this means to allure the Beneficence of his Creatures to one another: For if God's Blessing commonly attended the most covetous Endeavours of Men, we should not be so apt to mind the Works of *Mercy*; certainly the greatest Encouragement to them is, God's Promise that he will accept of them as lent to himself, and will be the Pay-master. What strange Confusion would be brought into the World, should God abandon it, and let covetous, unjust, oppressing and defrauding Men go on in their wicked Courses, and reap all the Advantage of their wicked and hard-hearted Devices? It is then a necessary Part of God's good Conduct and Management of the World, that a Blessing attends charitable Persons, and charitable Societies; and, on the other Hand, that the hard-hearted uncharitable Wretches should either be disappointed in their Contrivances for getting and hoarding, or should not have the Comfort of enjoying what they gather, but should lay it up for him that will have *Mercy* on the Poor. (2.) It is agreeable to God's *Justice*, that Men should meet with Rewards and Punishments suitable to their good

and bad Actions. *With the Merciful*, saith the Psalmist, Psal. xviii. 25. *thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with an upright Man thou wilt shew thyself upright: With the Pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the Froward thou wilt shew thyself froward*; that is, as these Words are well paraphrased by an eminent Divine, (a) “Such is
 “ the gracious Method of thy Providence, O
 “ Lord, who wilt do Good to those who do Good
 “ to others, and do them. Justice also (against
 “ their Oppressors and Calumniators) who pre-
 “ serve their Integrity; and keep thy Promises
 “ faithfully with those whose Piety is unfeigned,
 “ and who immoveably keep their Fidelity to
 “ thee. But if any will take crooked Ways to
 “ attain their Ends, thou wilt ensnare them in
 “ their own Devices; and by such Means as they
 “ least think of, lead them to Destruction.” It
 is plain the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*
 looked upon it as a Piece of divine Justice to re-
 compence Works of Charity done to the Saints.
 Heb. vi. 10. *For God is not unrighteous, says he,*
to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye
have shewed toward his Name, in that ye have mi-
nistred to the Saints, and do minister. (3.) It is
 agreeable to God’s *Goodness* to shew *Mercy* to the
Merciful. In strict Justice, indeed, our *merciful*
 Deeds, being mixed with great Imperfections, and
 balanced with abundance of Sins, could produce
 but very small Hopes of Retribution; but when
 we consider that God’s Justice will be dispensed
 with *Mercy*, we have all Reason to hope, that,
 sooner or later, the *Merciful* shall be *mercifully* re-
 warded. *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy*, saith
 the

(a) Bishop Patrick.

the Psalmist, Psal. lxxii. 12. *for thou renderest to every Man according to his Work.*

2. If we consider the Nature of Man, we shall find something in it to confirm this Doctrine, that *merciful Men shall obtain Mercy*. For (1.) *Mercifulness* is a very obliging and endearing Virtue, and naturally disposes all Mankind to such a Love and Kindness to the *merciful* Person, that he must needs find the good Effects of it, if ever he has Occasion for *Mercy* himself; *For a good Man*, the Apostle saith, *some would even dare to die*, Rom. v. 7. (2.) It is but reasonable to suppose that many Objects of Charity and *Mercy* having been relieved by the *merciful* Man, they will at least put up many Thanksgivings and Prayers to God for him; and that God, who is the Hearer of Prayer, will certainly hear and answer the Prayers which are put up to him on so good an Account. (3.) It is to be hoped that those Persons who have been relieved by the *merciful* Man, will not all of them prove so ungrateful, but that several of them will use their utmost Endeavours to shew the same *Mercy* and Kindness to him in his Distress, which he shewed to them in theirs. So that upon all Accounts *Blessed are the Merciful; for they shall obtain Mercy*.

Having thus gone through the Text, I shall briefly, by way of Application, draw an Inference or two from it, and conclude.

1. Is *Mercifulness* a Qualification necessary for all *Christ's* Disciples, to dispose them for his heavenly Kingdom? Then this discovers to us what *unchristian* Methods those of Cruelty and Persecution are, either for propagating the Gospel, or for preserving the Truth and Purity of it. The
Church

Church of *Rome* has been most notoriously guilty in this respect; for supposing these were the Truths of *Christ*, which she maintains (as God knows these Truths are buried by her in a great Heap of other Rubbish) who gave her Power to propagate, or preserve them by such cruel and barbarous Methods, as they have done in so many Massacres, Inquisitions, and Persecutions, which they have set a Foot? What a Butchery was their first propagating of the Gospel in the *Spanish* Dominions in *America*, enough to make *Christianity* stink in the Nostrils of the *Heathen*? And how deep that cruel Church has drank of the Blood of Martyrs, their Persecutions and Inquisitions set on, where-ever they have Power enough, do sufficiently testify to the World. Let us by no means imitate, but carefully avoid that bloody Spirit: These are Methods which God will never bless, and which have a greater Tendency to scare the *Heathen* away from *Christianity*, than to invite them to it. And therefore if we intend to make any Profelytes among the *Indians*, our Neighbours, or the *Negroes*, our Servants, let us treat both the one and the other with the Gospel Methods of Righteousness and *Mercy*, and not with the *Antichristian* Ways of Injustice and Cruelty; remembering my Text, that *Blessed are the Merciful; for they shall obtain Mercy.*

2. Are there so great Promises of temporal, spiritual, and eternal Blessings made to the *Merciful*? Then, by the Rule of Contraries, there are great Curses of all sorts laid up in Store for the Hard-hearted and Unmerciful. St. *James* tells us, that (b) *He shall have Judgment without Mercy that*

(b) Jam. ii. 13.

that hath shewed no Mercy. And therefore let us not content ourselves with *Sobriety* and *Temperance*, with *Justice* and *Honesty*, nay, not with Devotions and Sacraments, except we abound in this Grace also of Bounty and Mercy to the Poor, which ye see is attended with many noble Promises both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Of which God give us all Grace, by being truly *merciful*, in due Time to become Partakers, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord, To whom, &c.

S E R M O N XI.

MAT. V. 8.

Blessed are the Pure in Heart : For they shall see God.

IN these Words our Saviour endeavours to take off another evil Disposition of the Multitude and the Disciples, with relation to the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, which was, their being so much addicted to carnal Pleasures ; for, among other Things which are usually proposed by Conquerors, Wealth, Honour, Luxury, Triumph over Enemies, arbitrary Government, and Revenge, this Part of the *Mahometan* Paradise uses likewise to take up a chief Place in their Thoughts ; namely, a full Gratification of their Lusts : And therefore, among many other Virtues requisite to prepare and dispose them for *Christ's* Kingdom, it was necessary to add this of *Purity*, and to let them know, that without it there was no such Thing as the being a genuine Member of the *Christian* Church here, or any Hopes of Attainment of the Beatifick Vision hereafter. *Blessed are the Pure in Heart : For they shall see God.*

In which Words we are to consider,

I. The

I. The Virtue here recommended, *Purity of Heart*.

II. The Encouragement annexed, *The seeing of God*.

III. How *Purity of Heart* disposes us for the Knowledge and Vision of God.

I. We are *First* to consider the Virtue here recommended, *Purity of Heart*; *Blessed are the Pure in Heart*. In which Words are described, says St. *Chrysostome*, either the Persons who are possessed of all Virtue, and are conscious to themselves of no ill Thing; or else those who study Chastity and Continence. The Expression is used, and is true in both these Senses. That great Father is for this last Sense, taking *Purity* for Chastity; and, indeed, what induces me to think it is intended here in that Sense for a Purity from the Sins of Uncleanness, is, because I take all the other *Beatitudes* to be particular Virtues, and such Virtues as did most directly correct their carnal Notions of *Christ's* Kingdom, and the wrong Dispositions of Mind occasioned thereby, of which this was one, as I just now shewed you; and therefore I am unwilling to interpret it in such a general Sense as would comprehend all the other *Beatitudes*, and make our Saviour use so many Tautologies, as he must use, if he meant Righteousness for the whole Duty of Man, and *Purity of Heart* for the general keeping of a good Conscience. Congruously then to what I take to be the general Scope and Design of this Discourse, particularly of these *eight Beatitudes*, which do each of them take off one of the bad Dispositions

tions for the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; I interpret *The Pure in Heart* to be those who not only endeavour after an Abstinence from the outward gross Sins of Uncleanness, but study likewise a Disentanglement from them, in Heart and Thought, setting their Love and Affection on God, as their chief Good and Happiness. These are the two Branches of this Virtue.

1. A mortifying of all lustful Inclinations.

2. The Exercise of the Love of God.

1. A mortifying of all lustful Inclinations, the Indulgence of which doth exceedingly pollute the Heart of Man. In this the *Christian* Religion distinguishes itself above all other Religions that ever were in the World. Many of the *Heathens* encouraged Fornication, and some of them the promiscuous Use of Women; the *Mahometan* and *Jewish* Religions, tho' they condemn all Whoredom, yet, by allowing Polygamy, and Divorces for very slight Causes, they have found Ways, under other Names, to give a most extraordinary Indulgence to Men's lustful Inclinations. But the *Christian* Religion has allowed no more Indulgence of that kind than is necessary for the Propagation of the World, and the virtuous Education of Children, and a reasonable Partition of the Cares of Life in holy Matrimony; and even in that State itself there are great Restraints of Purity and Continence required.

But besides the external Part of *Purity* and Chastity, there is a much higher Degree of this Virtue required in my Text; for *Purity of Heart* is a much further Degree of Continence than a bare Abstinence from Fornication, and Adultery, and other more unnatural Impurities; it reaches the

the Heart and Thoughts, and kills Lust or unlawful Love in the Bud : It stops up that Fountain of all Uncleanneſs, and ſuffers it not to break out, not ſo much as into impure Imaginations, far leſs luſtful Deſigns, Propoſitions, or Intrigues.

If any one ſhould be deſirous to know why a thing ſo natural to Men as luſtful Thoughts, ſhould be ſo ſtrictly prohibited, as we find they are in divers Places of the *New Teſtament*, even under Pain of Damnation ; I anſwer, for the ſame Reaſon that rank poiſonous Weeds, which are apt to infect the Soil, are to be rooted up as ſoon as perceived in a Garden ; for if they are neglected they ſoon kill all the good Plants that are near them, and ſpread over all the Ground, that it becomes good for nothing. So theſe unclean Thoughts are ſuch a poiſonous Weed, that wherever they are indulged they eat out all other virtuous Inclinations, and make a Man uſeleſs as to all other good Deſigns and Buſineſs.

I foreſee there will be another Occaſion hereafter of handling this Virtue at large, when we come to our Saviour's Explication of the *Seventh Commandment*, which follows in this ſame Chapter ; and therefore I ſhall be but ſhort upon it at preſent, in conſidering a little wherein the Mortification of inward Luſt doth conſiſt : And this I ſhall attempt to do in a few uſeful Rules, leaving the Succeſs to God's Grace, without which all our own Endeavours will prove but mere Cobwebs upon the Approach of Temptations.

(1.) *Fiſt*, then, It is certain that Luſt is much better dealt with at a Diſtance, than near at Hand ; ſo all thoſe Means are the beſt, in order to the Mortification of it, which keep it from ever kindling

dling in the Heart at all: Such as, *E. gr.* the diligent Exercise of the Love of God; the drawing near to him by incessant Prayer; the storing of our Minds and Memories with such Scripture Truths and Phrases as may serve for so many Antidotes against the Sins of Uncleanneſs; the keeping of the Body under by conſtant Sobriety and Temperance, and frequent Fasting; the keeping of the Mind always well employed in ſome good Buſineſs, Idleneſs and Lazineſs being the great Opportunities the Devil makes uſe of to throw in his Temptations; the keeping out of the Way of all tempting Objects, avoiding the Converſation of all lewd and dangerous Company, and abſtaining carefully from reading or hearing read all laſcivious Books, Songs, or Ballads, and carefully keeping all ſuch from your Children, and all others over whom ye have any Authority, or with whom ye have any Intereſt; and at laſt, when nothing elſe will do, making uſe of that Remedy which God has appointed, lawful Marriage.

(2.) But tho' theſe Remedies are the beſt which keep Luſt from kindling in the Heart, the other are not to be neglected, which aſſiſt us in its nearer Approaches, and our more cloſe and immediate Conflict with it; ſuch as throwing out impure Thoughts with Indignation and Abhorrence, ſo ſoon as they preſent themſelves to our Minds; it is perhaps in the Power of the Devil to throw in a ſudden impure Thought, but it is our Fault if we harbour it, and the longer we harbour it, it is ſo much more dangerous a Guest: And to enable us to throw out ſuch Thoughts, it will be a great Help to us not to ſtand arguing and dallying with them,

them, but to betake ourselves, as fast as we can, to some other good Business; for it is a true Observation of this sort of Sins, that they are not so easily resisted by brisk Attacks, as by prudent Retreats; and therefore if we divert the Temptation by hastening into other Company and Business, and not trusting ourselves alone with it, far less with the tempting Object, by the Grace of God we may get our Minds recovered into a better Temper.

(3.) Because after our utmost Care it is to be feared that sometimes we shall be overcome with the Temptation, and at best something of Impurity will stick to us, we must take Care to exercise a daily Repentance with relation to those Sins, and never to give up ourselves to any evil Habit of them: For it is most certain, that by every repeated Act Sin grows stronger, and we grow weaker, and more and more out of Heart; so that at last, by frequent Foils, we shall become so cowardly, like an Army that is often beaten, that we shall scarce be able to stand before our Enemy at all.

So much for the negative Part of this Duty of *Purity of Heart*, the Mortification of Lust.

2. I come next to the more positive Part of it, namely, the fixing of our Affection on the only worthy Object, or the Duty of the Love of God, in which true *Purity of Heart* consists. All Creatures have something that is their chief Good, in seeking after which they place their chief Delight: The chief Good of brute Creatures consists in sensible Things, such as tend to the fattening of the Body, and the gratifying the Lusts thereof; but the chief Good of rational Crea-

tures is to enjoy God; and whenever the Heart of Man goes a whoring after inferior Things, it contracts so much Impurity. Only there is this Difference between him and the other more spiritual superior Beings, that he, being made up of Soul and Body, and being obliged to provide for both, cannot addict himself entirely to the Care of his Soul, but is allowed in a subordinate Manner to mind the Body and the Things of this Life; only it is expected and required of him that he should mind his Soul, and the chief Good thereof, in the principal Place, and other Things moderately, and within such Bounds as God has appointed. He is likewise taught, that it is but for a short Time, the Time of this present Life, that he is to be under this Necessity of providing for the Body, and that there is an eternal immortal State to succeed this short Life, where he shall be admitted to the more immediate uninterrupted Vision and Fruition of God. Now the more the Soul is disentangled from the Love of inferior Things, and the more intent it is on the Love of God, its supreme Good, so much the purer it is, so much the remoter from the beastly, and so much the nearer to the angelical Nature. Just so much, then, as we advance in the Love of God, so much do we advance in *Purity*: There is no Medium; either the Soul will be dilated in the Love of God, or hampered and polluted with the Love of the World. As the Love of inferior Things defiles the Soul, the Love of God clears it of its Defilement, and makes it more and more angelical; and therefore one of the best of Studies is, how to (a) *keep ourselves in the Love of God*,
whether

(a) Jude, Verse 21.

whether by an intent Contemplation of his glorious Attributes and Perfections, as we are able to understand them from his Works of Creation or Providence, and more particularly from the *Revelations* of himself in the *holy Scriptures*; or by the Consideration of the many Expressions of his Love to us, especially in sending his dear Son *Jesus Christ* into the World for our Redemption and Salvation, and bestowing upon us the Graces and Gifts of his holy Spirit, and for his waiting with so much Goodness and long-suffering Patience, for our Repentance and Amendment of Life; and for the innumerable other Mercies and Favours he is daily bestowing on us; or whether by the Exercise of Love, in a continual drawing near to him in Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings; or by a prompt and chearful Obedience to all his Precepts, and a patient Suffering, when we are called to it, for his Sake, especially by slighting every thing that comes in Competition with the Love of God, and admitting nothing but in Subordination to it, and in such Degrees and Measures as is very consistent with it. All these, which are the Exercises of the Love of God, are the best Means for purifying the Heart from all inordinate Affection to inferior Things, more particularly from all unlawful Lusts and Pleasures, which are the Impurities designed to be cautioned against in this *Beatitude*. So much for the Virtue here recommended, *Purity of Heart*.

II. The *Second* Thing we are to consider, is the Encouragement annexed, *The seeing of God*. By this Expression we are not to understand that God is to be seen with our bodily Eyes; his Glory being infinitely great, is not a proportionable Object.

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ject for our weak Sight. The Apostle St. Paul
tells us, 1 Tim. vi. 16. that *He dwells in the Light*
which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man
hath seen, nor can see. This seeing of God, then,
must be with the Eye of the Mind, and we are
to understand it both of that Measure of the
Knowledge of God which is communicated to
good Men here, and of that more perfect Know-
ledge of God which shall be communicated to
them hereafter.

Of that Measure of Knowledge of God which
is attainable here, some is more imperfect by the
Light of Nature; (b) *For the invisible Things of*
him from the Creation of the World are discerned,
being understood by the Things that are made, even
his eternal Power and Godhead. Some other is
more perfect, namely, as it is revealed in God's
Word, tho' in that the Law and the Prophets
were very obscure; and till *Christ* brought us the
Revelation of God's Mercy and Good-will to
Mankind, we were very much in the Dark, as to
that Particular. *No Man hath seen God at any*
Time, saith St. *John*, Chap. i. 18. *The only begot-*
ten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he
hath declared him. Yet after all the Manifestation
Christ has thought fit to make of the Father, even
that is very dark, in Comparison of what it shall
be in the future State. St. Paul compares the one
to *seeing through a Glass darkly*, and the other to
seeing Face to Face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But what
that beatifick Vision will be, we can but very im-
perfectly tell, tho' in general we know it will be
infinitely glorious and happy; yet, from this Pro-
mise

(b) Rom. i. 20

mise in the Text, we may apprehend somewhat of the Felicity of that future State. For,

1. As it is a Knowledge of God, and Acquaintance with him, we may easily apprehend that it will be the greatest Improvement of the Understanding. If the *Queen of Sheba* could observe how happy *Solomon's* Servants were, who stood continually before him, and heard his Wisdom; what a vast Degree of Happiness must it be, to be acquainted with unerring Wisdom itself; to have the Secrets of God's Providence explained, the Beauty of his Counsels and Works displayed, all the Endearments of his Love made known, and all the Advantages of his everlasting Friendship clearly represented to the enlightened Mind and Understanding.

2. This Knowledge of God will not only improve the Understanding, by presenting it with the best Objects, but by enlarging the Powers and Capacities of it, to take in a vast deal of that Knowledge unspeakably beyond what in this imperfect State it is capable of. For here, as our bodily Eyes are soon blinded by looking upon the Sun in its meridian Brightness; so our weak Understandings are soon amazed and confounded with the Contemplation of God's Nature and Attributes, and with the Consideration of his Works of Creation and Providence; as being a Subject far above its Reach and Capacity. But then the Mind shall be so much improved in its intellectual Faculty, that there will be as great a Difference between what it understands now, and what it shall understand then, as there is between seeing a remote Object by the help of a Prospe-

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Active Glafs, and the seeing it at Hand, what the
Apostle calls *Face to Face*.

3. This Knowledge will not be a dry speculative Knowledge, influencing only the Brain and the intellectual Faculty, as much of our Knowledge of divine Things is here below; but it will suitably affect us with Love and Complacence; it will be a lively Sense and Experience, rather than a Knowledge and Contemplation: And consequently will break in upon the Heart and Affections with all the Tendernefs of a pure Love, and ravishing Joy and Delight, which is altogether unconceivable, and indeed inexplicable by any of those inferior Loves and Complacencies we know here below: For besides that the Objects of them are of infinitely less Dignity, and prove commonly but mere Vanities and Delusions, never affording the Heart that Degree of Happiness and Satisfaction which it promised itself in the Enjoyment of them; there are so many Things to allay and abate, and at last totally to destroy that pretended Felicity, that it is nothing, or less than nothing, in comparison of the Love and Enjoyment of an Object of infinite and endless Worth, without any the least Fear or Sorrow with it, and in whom, tho' such Degrees of Happiness and Perfection shall be immediately discovered as are sufficient to content and satisfy the greatest rational Desire; yet there shall be continually a gradual Increase of Knowledge and Love, by new Discoveries of Perfection, and fresh Participations of Joy to all Eternity. But after all we must confess that this Part of the Happiness of seeing God in Heaven, doth infinitely exceed all we can conceive or speak of it.

III. The

III. The *Third* Thing I was to consider from the Words is, what Influence this *Purity of Heart* has in disposing us for the Knowledge and Vision of God; and here I shall pass by how it disposes us by way of Condition. What seems to me most peculiar in the Promises annexed to these *Beatitudes*, is, that they are something resulting from the Nature of the *Christian* Virtues themselves, to which the Blessings are annexed. Poverty in Spirit, or a Disengagement of the Heart from the World, doth naturally dispose the Mind both for the evangelical State here, and for the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter; godly Sorrow doth naturally dispose us for spiritual Comforts; Meekness qualifies a Man for a quiet Enjoyment of his worldly Inheritance and Possession; Honesty secures a Man against Want and Poverty, and helps to provide him with a Competency of the good Things of this Life; Mercifulness naturally moves Mercy and Commiseration in others; and inward Purity here doth mightily prepare and dispose the Soul for the Knowledge, Sense, and Love of God: For there can be no greater Weight and Bias upon the Soul to hinder it in its Contemplation and Love of God, than the Love of unlawful Pleasures; and that for these, among other Reasons,

1. Because they intoxicate and bewitch a Man that he can't know, or be rightly sensible of his true Interest, or undertake any wise Conduct of himself. (c) *Whoredom and Wine take away the Heart.*

2. They blunt his Understanding, that he can have no right Sense of God and Religion, but,

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like

like a brute Beast, he blindly follows the brutish Appetite, tho' to his own Destruction. *He goeth after her straightway*, saith Solomon, Prov. vii. 22. *as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; till a Dart strike through his Liver, as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.*

3. They stupify his Consideration, that tho' he is endowed with better Principles, and knows better Things, he can't mind or consider them. Thus it is recorded of Solomon himself, for all his Wisdom and Experience, that (d) *When he was old, his many Wives turned away his Heart after other gods; and his Heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the Heart of David his Father.* And tho' they have not this Effect on all Men to turn them away to Idolatry, they certainly turn their Minds from seeking and minding God.

4. They weaken the Resolution and active Faculties, that they can't flee upwards towards God in Devotion, or put any good Purpose vigorously in Execution. In this respect the Heart of a whorish Woman is compared to *Snares and Nets*, and her Hands to *Bands*; and the Difficulty of extricating one's self from those evil Habits, is compared to a Man's struggling to get out of (e) *a deep Ditch, or narrow Pit.* In short, it is certain that nothing doth more steal away the Heart from God than the Love of sinful Pleasures. If we shake off these, we not only remove the greatest Impediment to the Knowledge and Love of God, but prepare the Soul for the Influences of God's holy Spirit. As in a clear Looking-glass the Face is best seen, so in a *pure Heart* we see

(d) 1 Kings xi. 4.

(e) Prov. xxiii. 27.

see the clearest Ideas, and have the brightest Reflexions of the divine Nature and Perfections.

I shall conclude with a short Exhortation to all to study this Character of a true Member of *Christ's Kingdom*, that is, of a true *Christian*, *Purity of Heart*; a most rare Virtue in this corrupt Generation, in which Men are so far from it, that they have shaken off all Modesty, which is the outward Garb and Appearance of it, and think it a Point of genteel good Breeding to glory in their Excesses, as to the contrary Vice. It is no wonder we have so little true Knowledge of God, and so little Sense and Experience of divine Things, when we neglect so much the best Means of attaining it, the purifying our Hearts from the Love of vile sinful Pleasures. Could we once persuade ourselves in good earnest to set about this Study, we should find all other good Things would follow as in a Chain; for from *Purity of Heart* would follow a Knowledge and Sense of God, and from thence the Love of him, and from thence a cheerful Obedience to his Commandments, and from thence a confirmed Habit of Holiness and Virtue, and from thence Peace and Joy, and Assurance of God's Love and Favour, both in this Life, and in that which is to come.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for *Jesus Christ's Sake*. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XII.

M A T. V. 9.

Blessed are the Peace-makers: For they shall be called the Children of God.

The First Sermon on this Text.

WE are now come to the two last *Beatitudes*, *Peaceableness* and *Patience*, which comprehend all such social Virtues as are requisite for our conversing and living quietly together in Society. The *first*, which is that of our Text, recommends all such Endeavours as with the Preservation of our Virtue and Innocence may prevent the infinite Broils and Troubles incident to us in human Society. The other puts us upon a patient suffering the Evils that come upon us, which by all the Arts and Methods of Peace we cannot prevent.

In treating on this of *Peaceableness* or *Peace-making*, I shall first consider the Description of the Virtue itself; then the Meaning of being called the Sons of God; and, *lastly*, how this Virtue entitles us to such a Promise.

I. As to the Virtue of *Peace-making*, in it our Lord meets with another of the wrong Dispositions of Mind his Hearers were prepossessed with concerning the Kingdom of the *Messiah*; for they fancied it would be a fierce and warlike Kingdom, that it would pick Quarrels with, and carry its Conquests over all the other Kingdoms of the World

World. Now in these Words our Saviour acquaints them that it was Men of quiet and peaceable Principles and Practices, and studious to advance the same among others, who were the fittest Subjects of that heavenly Kingdom, and not Incendiaries and bloody-minded Men.

As for the Description of the *Peace-makers*, that we may know what Duty is incumbent upon us from this *Beatitude*, I shall say something of it first *negatively*, then *positively*.

Negatively, then, 1. We are not from hence to apprehend that the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, or the Gospel State, will be so peaceable, that there will be no Differences of Judgment or Opinion under it; for while Men are in this World, subject to so much natural Error and Corruption, while the Prejudices of their Education, the Infusions of their Parents and Teachers, the vulgar Errors of their Country and Neighbourhood are so many, while People's Talents of Understanding, Endeavours, and Diligence, are so various; while there are so many Truths above our Reach in this imperfect State, which yet we will be grasping after; and while there is no infallible Judge upon Earth to decide Controversies; it is impossible but that there will be Differences in Opinion; and the many Precepts of our Religion concerning Peace and Quietness go upon the Supposition of such Differences, and are only good Rules for the better managing of ourselves under all these Circumstances.

2. These Differences being supposed, it is not the Design of the *Christian* Precepts about *Peace-making*, to prohibit our uttering and venting our Doubts and different Opinions about Things to

one another, or even to prohibit our arguing and disputing about them, so it be done in a friendly and peaceable Manner, and with a Design to find out the Truth. This is one great Benefit of *Christian* Society, that by a Communication of Counsels, and Notions, and Reasons, we may be edified from one another, and have the Advantage of one another's Talents, and Thoughts, and Studies; an Advantage which would turn to much better Account, and which we should be much more sensible of, if we did not bring our irregular Passions along with us, which make us commonly both manage our Disputes in a very unfair Manner, and, in general, contend for Pride and Victory, rather than for finding out the Truth.

Nor, 3. By this Precept of *Peace-making*, must we think ourselves obliged actually to put an End to all the Differences which are in the World, this being a Thing which passes our Power and Capacity; and therefore all that can be meant by the Precept is, as *St. Paul* explains it, *That if it be possible, and as much as lieth in us, we live peaceably with all Men*, Rom. xii. 18. Nor,

4. Are we to extend this Possibility and Stretch of our Power to all Things simply possible, but we are to limit that Possibility to our own lawful and regular Endeavours; we are not, with another bloody Church, to think that Errors, Heresies, and Schisms, are to be extirpated with Fire and Faggot, by all the Methods of Cruelty and Oppression; but only by such rational Gospel Methods as we can justify to God and a good Conscience.

So that the whole Duty of *Peace-making* is reduced to this, even to consider and put in Practice
such

such Methods of *Peace-making* as are lawful in themselves, and suited to that Station which we hold in the World. Now the Rules and Exercises of this *Peace-making* are so many, and vary so much according to the Circumstances of Persons, Time, and Place, that it is not probable they can be comprehended within the Limits of a Discourse of this Nature. Yet I shall, for your better understanding the Meaning and Importance of this Duty, endeavour briefly to represent to you,

1. Some of the chief of the general Precepts belonging to it, which may direct to our right Practice of the Duty of *Peace-making* in general.

2. Some more particular Precepts relating to the Practice of this Duty under particular Circumstances, as we are Members of ecclesiastical or civil Society.

As to the general Precepts for *Peace-making*,

1. Let us believe that nothing is small or inconsiderable (howsoever trifling we may think it in its own Nature) the doing of which, or the Neglect of which, may occasion the exasperating of our Neighbour, and consequently the transgressing this Duty of *Peace-making*. If we consider from how small and inconsiderable Beginnings Contention doth arise, and to what incredible Height it will immediately grow, we may easily be persuaded that we cannot be too cautious of our Words or Actions, by considering not only the immediate Purport and Tendency of them, but even the remote Consequences which may be drawn from them by others, to the creating Contention or Disturbance. Little did the Women, who commended *David* in their Songs, thinking him then the King's Favourite, consider
what

what a Load of lasting Odium and Persecution they brought upon him, by their rash and ill-worded Commendation, preferring his Exploits even to those of the King himself. (a) *Saul has slain his Thousands, and David his ten Thousands.* The Jealousy these Words raised in the King's Breast, and the Tragedy which ensued upon that Jealousy, shews us how necessary it is to watch every little Word, or Action, or Omission, that either in itself, or by meeting with the distempered Passions of Men, may kindle the Fire of Contention. Let this then be the first Rule in this Matter, to avoid Rashness and Inconsideration in our Words and Actions.

2. Because, as our Saviour observes, *Out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh*, if we would be sure not to offend our Neighbour with our Tongue or Hands, let us take Care that we harbour no Rancour, or Malice, or Envy, or Hatred against him in our Hearts; but that we be inwardly possessed with a Spirit of Love and Amity: For it is next to impossible to entertain an amicable and peaceable Correspondence for any long Time with those we hate, or have a bad Opinion of. And therefore if there be any Persons of whom we can't as yet command ourselves to have this good Opinion, or inward good Affection, it is so much the more necessary, to set a strict Watch upon ourselves, that we make not such Persons the Subject of our Discourse, especially before them who may make a bad Use of it.

3. In order to *Peace-making*, it is necessary that we study to be of meek, humble, modest and
peaceable

(a) 1 Sam. xviii. 7.

peaceable Tempers ourselves; for besides that if we are otherwise we may be easily twitted in the Teeth with a *Physician*; *cure thyself*; Persons of such *unpeaceable* Tempers, by their rough handling the Sores, put the Patients to more Pain, and make them only despair of a Cure at the Hands of such unskilful Chirurgeons; and so often leave the Differences between Neighbours worse than they found them.

4. If we would be *Peace-makers*, there are many useful Rules to be observed, both as to the Matter and the Manner of our Addresses to our Neighbour in that Particular, towards the rendering our Endeavours successful.

(1.) We are by all Means to avoid a Spirit of Contradiction, as being a great Enemy to this *peaceable* and *Peace-making* Temper; not that we are obliged always to assent to what is advanced by the Company; but first of all let us not, as a great many quarrelsome Persons do, right or wrong, take up the opposite Argument; but rather let us be inclined, as far as Equity, Truth, and Charity will give us Leave, to agree, and that very heartily and readily; that if it be necessary to differ in any thing, the better Way may be made to what we can't agree, by our *peaceable* and courteous Compliance with as much as we can.

(2.) But perhaps it is not all Truths to which we can't assent, that we should think ourselves immediately obliged to contradict; for some Truths in philosophical, scholastick, or historical Matters, nay, some lesser Things in Religion, are of so small Importance, that it is not worth while to venture a Diminution of Peace or Love for the sake of them. It is observed, that our
blessed

bleſſed Saviour, when he was in the World, tho' he could have rectified many Miſtakes in Matters of natural Philoſophy, Politicks, Hiſtory, and other Arts and Sciences; yet thought it not worth while to trouble the World with theſe Things, contenting himſelf to undeceive them, and ſet them right in Matters of Divinity and Morality, which concerned their Salvation. If all Men had been of our Saviour's Temper in this Matter, what an effectual Stop had been put to moſt of the Controverſies which are in the World, being for the moſt part fierceſt about Matters of ſmalleft Moment, and the moſt indifferent to the Salvation of Men?

(3.) When the Truths are of ſuch Importance that it may be neceſſary to undeceive our Neighbour about them, we are not as yet raſhly to venture upon it without a great many Precautions in favour of this Duty of *Peaceableneſs* in my Text. For if either we know him to be ſo wedded to the contrary Error, that he is at that Time only capable of being irritated by Contradiſtion, but not of giving Ear to the Truth; then perhaps it is better to forbear, and not to caſt our Pearls before Swine; or if we know that he has a particular Averſion to us, and that there are ſome others from whom the Truth would be received with leſs Prejudice; then perhaps we had better decline the Office ourſelves, and put it into the Hands of thoſe others. Or, laſtly, if it be neceſſary that the Truth come out, and we are the proper Perſons to convey it to the Man in Error, we muſt, for *Peace's* ſake, be as careful of the Manner in which we deliver it, as of the Matter itſelf, that it contain nothing but Truth indeed.

And

And therefore the Discourse which conveys it must be so cloathed with Humility, Modesty, Submission, Charity and Courtesy, that it may the better take Place, without encroaching on this Duty of *Peaceableness*, as it would certainly do if it were delivered with an Air of Positiveness, Passion, want of Respect, or Affectation of Superiority or Ascendency: And if such Defects as these would endanger the Virtue of *Peaceableness*, much more would all satyrical, scornful, and reproaching Language or Behaviour in the Delivery of it. So much for the Manner of Contradiction, or offering our Dissent.

5. If we would be *Peace-makers*, as we must be careful not to give Offence to others, so we must watch ourselves, that we be not too ready to take Fire, and be offended with the seeming Provocations of others. In this a great deal of Candour and Equity is required, in putting the fairest Construction on our Neighbour's Words and Actions, they are capable of; in making Allowances for the Prejudices of their Education, and wrong Instruction; in being sparing to revive the Memory of their Miscarriages, after they have repented of them, and amended them, and in a Readiness to connive at small Faults, from a common Sense of human Infirmary; and to accept of any reasonable Amends and Satisfaction for greater ones: For even in common Life that Observation of our Lord's holds true, (*b*) *It must needs be that Offences come*; it is impossible it should be otherwise, considering human Frailty, and the many Inadvertencies and Mistakes, besides the

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(*b*) Mat. xviii. 7.

rash Words and hasty Passions of Men. And he that can't either prudently over-look, or patiently digest an Injury; he that takes Fire at every rash Word, and resents every the smallest Provocation, must resolve to live in a continual State of War with Mankind, and to bring daily upon himself new Enemies, and fresh Quarrels; whereas, by a little Patience, and forbearing to take our Revenge, when it is in our Power, our Neighbour's Passion would evaporate, and, if he has common Sense and Consideration, he would quickly come to himself, and observe how much he was beholden to our discreet Forbearance.

6. To this Duty of *Peace-making* it is highly requisite that we avoid Pragmaticalness, that is, the needless intruding ourselves to meddle with, and to pass our Censure upon other Men's Business. There is, indeed, a charitable and friendly Consideration of one another's Circumstances, which requires that we be mutually helpful *to bear one another's Burdens*; this our Religion calls for, and it were much to be wished that it were more put in Practice: But, instead of that, we pry into our Neighbour's Secrets, that we may censure and find Fault; and are extreme rash in passing our Judgment in every thing, and do a great deal of Mischief by these rash Censures, exposing our Neighbour to the Contempt of others, and so often wronging his Interest, and hurting his Reputation, and sowing the Seeds of lasting Discord and Contention. This Temper is so much the more dangerous, in that commonly it is restrained within no Bounds of Reason or Religion; no Sacredness of the Subject, no Dignity of the Person, no want of Intelligence and

due Information, no evil Consequence of exposing Authority, restrains Persons of this meddling Temper from pronouncing their Opinion boldly of the greatest Mysteries of Religion, of the most deliberate Actions of State, of the greatest Secrets of War and Peace, of the Fitness or Unfitness of all Persons for all Trust and Business; and, in short, it is from this unhappy Temper that every the silliest Clown will boldly take upon him to censure the Actions of his Prince or Governor, and, as much as in him lies, to breed and foment those Misunderstandings, which, being brooded by Discontent, and spread through great Numbers, come at last to end in Schisms in the Church, and Seditions and Rebellions in the State:

(c) *So great a Matter doth a little Fire kindle.*

There is no greater either Instrument or Ornament of *Peace*, than for every Man to keep his own Rank, and to do his own Duty, without usurping an undue Authority over his Neighbour, or pretending to censure his Superiors in Things wherein he himself is not justly aggrieved.

7. There is no greater Enemy to this Duty of *Peace-making*, than the common Practice of running into Parties and Factions, and espousing these Parties by the Lump, so as to think ourselves obliged to defend all their Principles, Customs, and Actions, and to condemn all those of the opposite Side. This is a Way to propagate Differences from Generation to Generation, and, instead of Love and Peace, to make it a Duty to propagate a Spirit of Rancour and Animosity, to vilify and depreciate all the good Things we find in our Adversaries, purely because they are theirs;

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and,

and, perhaps, to run into the contrary Vices, purely for Distinction sake. By this Means we confine all our Duty to that of our own Party, and take upon us, as it were, to excommunicate all others, and to think that common Justice and Charity is none of their Due; but if ever we mind to cement into one Body, as our common *Christianity* obliges us, this Spirit of Faction and Division must be totally extirpated, and we must learn to be Friends of Truth, and Virtue, and Goodness, where-ever we can find them, and to follow Peace with all good Men, of whatsoever Denomination.

8. *Lastly*, If we would learn this Duty of *Peaccableness* and *Peace-making*, let us observe, on the one Hand, what are the usual Causes and Occasions of Discord, and avoid them; and, on the other Hand, what are the common Procurers and Promoters of Peace and good Neighbourhood, and in our Practice keep up and encourage them.

Particularly, of the first sort, let us avoid every thing that favours of Pride, Vanity, Cozenage, Oppression, Exaction, taking Advantage of little Trespases, Litigiousness, Whispering, Tale-bearing, unnecessary repeating or aggravating former Misdemeanors, Censoriousness, Disputatiousness, or whatever is contrary to *Christian* Civility and Courtesy: It requires a constant good Guard upon ourselves, as well as an universal good Will to Mankind, neither to give, nor to be too apt to take Offence. And because there is one general Enemy to this Vigilance over ourselves, namely, Drunkenness, which drowns Reason, and gives a Loose to Passion; therefore he who loves Peace, will be upon his Guard against this Vice also:

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For (d) *Who hath Wo?* says Solomon, *Who hath Sorrow? Who hath Contention?* Besides several other Mischiefs there reckoned up: It is *He that tarries long at the Wine*, and intoxicates himself with strong Drink.

And of the *second* Sort, the Procurers of Peace, let us particularly cherish all the obliging, indearing, and good-natured Virtues, such as Charity, Humanity, Hospitality, Civility, and all the laudable, innocent, and friendly Customs of the Country and Place where we live, carrying ourselves dutifully to our Superiors, and modestly to our Inferiors, and lovingly and kindly to all; (e) *Following Peace with all Men, as well as Holiness, without which none shall see God.*

So much for the general Precepts helping us to the Practice of the Duty of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making*. I should next have proceeded to the Consideration of some more particular Precepts for this Duty incumbent upon us, as we are Members of civil or ecclesiastical Society; but being unwilling to trespass on your Patience, I shall refer this to another Opportunity. *Now to God the Father, &c.*

(d) Prov. xxiii. 29.

(e) Heb. xii. 14.

S E R M O N XIII.

MAT. V. 9.

Blessed are the Peace-makers: For they shall be called the Children of God.

The Second Sermon on this Text.

HAVING in a former Discourse entered upon these Words, there were three Things I proposed to do in the handling of them.

1. To give you a Description of the Duty of *Peace-making*.

2. To consider the Privilege annexed, what it is to be called *the Sons of God*.

3. To shew how the Compliance with the Duty of *Peace-making* disposes and entitles us to this Privilege.

As to the *first* of these, the Description of the Duty of *Peace-making*, after I had told you *negatively* what it is not, and so cleared it from some wrong Notions Men might be apt to have of it; I proceeded to the positive Rules and Exercises of it: And finding this a Subject of great Copiousness and Variety, I proposed,

1. To consider the chief of the general Precepts belonging to it, directing our Practice of the Duty of *Peace-making* in general.

2. To

2. To consider some more particular Precepts relating to the Practice of this Duty under particular Circumstances, as we are Members of ecclesiastical or civil Society.

As to the general Precepts relating to the Duty of *Peace-making* in general, I then dispatched them, and shall proceed now to the more particular ones, relating to the Practice of this Duty in particular Circumstances, as we are Members of ecclesiastical or civil Society.

I shall begin with the Duty of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* as we are Members of the Church, or ecclesiastical Society; which Duty is but little understood in the Theory, and yet less regarded in the Practice. The chief Branches of it I take to be these.

I. That we carefully avoid all Errors and Heresies, by acquainting ourselves with, and firmly believing and adhering to the Doctrine of the Gospel as it is left us by *Christ* and his Apostles, and recorded in the holy Scriptures.

II. That in the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline we submit ourselves to such Rulers, Pastors and Teachers, as *Christ* has appointed in his Church.

III. That we preserve Peace and Union with all Members of the *Christian* Church, unless sinful Terms of Communion are required.

IV. That we exercise brotherly Love so far as to allow *Christian* Liberty in Things indifferent to all other Churches, without condemning them for not complying exactly with our Model.

V. That there be a mutual Propensity and Inclination to Peace, by sacrificing our private Opinions

These being Things of great Importance, and highly tending to the Peace of the Church, will require to be a little better explained, in order to their being rightly apprehended, and put in Practice.

I. The first Thing, then, I recommend, in order to the Peace of the Church, is a Knowledge and Belief, and firm Profession of the Doctrine of the Gospel, as delivered by *Christ* and his Apostles, and recorded in the holy Scriptures. This Foundation, being once well laid, would prevent a great many schismatical Principles and Practices, which, for want of a due Regard to it, have been set up in the Church, and have there kindled the Fire of Contention. For, 1. It is for want of minding this Foundation that the Church of *Rome* has taken upon her to impose so many other Things as Doctrines, and to enjoin the Belief of them as necessary to Salvation. The Bishops and Pastors of the Church should always remember, that tho' they are *Christ's* Delegates, and have his Commission, it is not an arbitrary Commission to teach and enjoin what they please, but a Commission directed and limited with abundance of Instructions; which if they should take upon them to falsify or transgress, both they are accountable to their great Master for the highest Breach of Trust, and the People likewise are exempted from their Obedience to them in all such Particulars. *Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;*

sed; faith St. Paul, *Gal. i. 8.* This I look upon as the greatest Infringement of the Peace of the Church, when any particular Church takes upon them to teach and impose for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. 2. All Enthusiasts, who, leaving the Rule of the holy Scriptures, set up the private Spirit as the Guide, without any other Limitation or Instruction, are bold Invaders of the Peace of the Church; for that is all one as if in Temporals we should lay aside all Laws, and leave every Man to do what seems good in his own Eyes. 3. All they who take upon them to impose forced and constrained Senses on the holy Scripture, against the true literal Meaning of it, that they may bend it to their own Reason, being resolved to admit of nothing in Religion above what our weak Reason can comprehend, are highly culpable against this first Rule of the Church's Peace; for there is but little Difference between laying aside a Rule or Law altogether, and the detorting it to a Sense which we ourselves can't believe was ever intended.

But I confess I can't reckon in this Number of the Transgressors of the Church's Peace those who do their best to find out the true Sense and Meaning of the holy Scripture, when, either through Weakness of Capacity, or for want of sufficient Helps to understand the Scriptures, or by reason of the Deepness of the Mystery, or the Difficulty of the Scripture itself (for in all Things it is not alike plain,) they miss of the true Sense and Meaning of it, and purely upon that Account fall into any Error, either of Judgment or Practice, provided they are not obstinate in it, but willing to hear Reason, and to yield to it, as
far

far as they find themselves convinced; for this is no more than what the sincerest Inquirers into Truth are subject to, in this imperfect State, where we see but in part, and know but in part: Tho', God be thanked, all that is necessary to Salvation is so clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures, that he that studies it there with a sincere Mind, may find it, and put it in Practice.

II. A second Thing I mentioned, as to the Peace of the Church, was, that in the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline we submit ourselves to such Rulers, Pastors, and Teachers, as *Christ* hath appointed in his Church. It is very plain, in the *New Testament*, that our Saviour erected all *Christian* Believers into one Body or Society, called the Church; that out of them he chose some, with a Power of teaching and guiding others in the way of Salvation, whom he called *Apostles*; that he likewise gave these Apostles Power of ordaining others, both to take part of this Care in their Life-time, and to succeed them in the whole after their Decease; Men set apart from the World, who should addict themselves to this great Work, the Care of Souls; an Institution of absolute Use and Necessity to the End of the World: For what Confusion must it let in to any Society, where all are alike, none to direct, none to obey; where every one invades the Teacher's Office at Pleasure, and this sacred Order of the Ministry is cast in common to every bold Invader? Now this wholesome Institution has been many Ways neglected and overthrown, to the utter Destruction of Peace and good Order in the Church; for the *Quakers*, and some other Enthusiasts, have made an open Insurrection
against

against the sacred Order of the Ministry, like *Co-rah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, who rose up against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and pretended that the whole Congregation was holy. They have given Leave to Men without any external Call from the Church, if they have but Confidence enough to pretend to an inward Call of the Spirit, to invade these sacred Offices; and not only so, but to deliver what Doctrine they themselves please, without giving any Account to the Rulers of the Church. And the Church of *Rome* has taken another Way to invade the Peace of the Church in this Particular; for the Ministry which by *Christ* was left in common to all the Apostles, and their Successors, they have, by an unheard-of Piece of Tyranny, limited to one Man, whom they set up with an uncontrolable Power to trample upon all the other Bishops and Pastors, and to countenance an infinite Number of Abuses and Corruptions, chiefly brought into the Church, to support his worldly Pomp and Grandeur. These are the two chief Invasions which have been made on the Order of Pastors in the *Christian* Church, by the Enthusiasts on the one Hand, and the *Papists* on the other; tho' it can't be denied that other very considerable Encroachments have been made on the Peace of the Church, in this Particular, by some who have overthrown the ancient Order of Episcopacy, to set up a Parity in the stead of it, which is always the Mother of Confusion; and by others, who have so encroached upon the ecclesiastical Discipline in the Hands of the Bishops and Pastors of the Church, that they have confounded the spiritual with the secular Sword; and, by the new Doctrine of *Erastianism*, have destroyed

destroyed the Discipline and Government of the Church to that Degree, that there is a new Heresy sprung up in our Days, which destroys the very Being of the Church as a Society, and makes it a mere Creature of the State: So many Ways has *Satan* with his Instruments endeavoured to over-turn this wholesome Order, at first appointed by *Christ* for so many good Ends and Purposes in his Church, particularly for the Preservation of Peace, Discipline, and good Government.

III. But tho' our great Care ought to be first for the Purity of Doctrine and Worship, next for such Pastors and Government as *Christ* hath set up in his Church; yet there is another Rule of Church Peace as necessary as any of these; and that is, that we preserve Peace and Union with all the Parts and Members of the *Christian* Church, unless sinful Terms of Communion with them are required. The zealous Gentlemen that insist so earnestly for the good Government and Discipline of the ancient Church, as if it were absolutely necessary to Salvation, put me in mind of a just Complaint of *Tully's* against *Cato*, that he gave his Opinion always in the *Senate* as if he had been living in *Plato's* Commonwealth, and not among the Dregs of *Romulus*. It is a much more proper Inquiry for us, what we may and ought to comply with for Peace Sake in this corrupt State of the Church, than what those noble primitive *Christians* arrived at. We must not for every Thing that is amiss break away, and make a Rent and Schism from the Body of the Church; if we do, I know not where we shall find a Church in the World at this Day so perfect, in which there are not many Things amiss, and which a good

Man would not wish to be otherwise. The Question is, Which Way we may best contribute our Pains towards the Amendment or Reformation of them, whether by continuing in the Church, or by abandoning it? Which seems to me much such a Dispute as if some more angry than skilful Men at Sea in a leaky Ship, which yet, by working duly at the Pump, and caulking, and stopping the Leaks, would make very good Way, and at last carry the Passengers safe to their intended Port; as if, I say, these angry Men in such a Vessel should be for making a Mutiny among the Seamen and Passengers on this Account, and propose the leaving the Ship, and betaking themselves some to the Long-Boat, and some to the Pinnace, for their Safety, and better Dispatch of their Voyage. So I think the true Question should not be, Whether the Church we are in is without Fault or Blemish, or whether she is to be compared, especially for Exactness of Discipline, with the pure primitive Church, such a one as is not now to be found upon Earth, no more than perhaps there is any civil Government equal to *Plato's Commonwealth*; but Whether it is not a Church in which we may very well make a good Voyage to Heaven? And whether the Faults that are in it may not be better mended by our staying in it, than by our forsaking it, and betaking ourselves to the Meeting or Conventicle? I confess, if there is any such great Leak as cannot be stopt, and which, if it be not stopt, will sink the Ship, and drown the Passengers; such a Ship is at last to be abandoned: That is, if there is any one sinful Condition of Communion required of us, such as will endanger our Salvation; then, after
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all other Endeavours to amend it, let us leave such a Church, in God's Name. And this was our Case with the Church of *Rome*, which would not permit us to continue in her Communion, without professing several erroneous Doctrines, and joining in several Parts of idolatrous Worship; but if there is no sinful Condition of Communion required of us in the reformed Churches, tho' there are some Things amiss in them all, let us so far study Peace, as to make no Separation from such Churches, but quietly work out our Salvation in them, striving in our several Stations to reform and improve them to the best Advantage.

IV. It is a good Rule of Peace in the Church, to remember that the Points of mere Order and Decency are for the most part wisely left by our Saviour and his *Apostles* under general Rules, and the particular Rites and Ceremonies which may be constituted in Consequence of those general Rules, are various and alterable; and therefore great Grains of Allowance should be made to particular Churches, to settle or vary them according to the different Circumstances of Time and Place, and the various Dispositions of the Persons of whom that particular Church doth consist. We ought, then, to endeavour to lay no greater Stress on these Matters, than according to the Importance of them, and to comply with such innocent Customs as are established in the particular Church where we reside; but, at the same Time, to have a Care that we condemn not other Churches which have judged quite different Rites more decent and proper. And tho' we ourselves should happen to differ in our private Judgment,

as to the Conveniency or Inconveniency of any of those Rites, while our Scruples are not about the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness, but only the Expediency of such Things; it is very fit, for Peace sake, that we sacrifice all such Scruples to the Order and Authority of the Government in Church or State under which we live.

V. *Lastly*, There is another Rule of Peace recommended by St. *Paul*, that in the Use of *Christian* Liberty great Regard is to be had to the Infirmities of our weak Brethren, lest they should be offended by our otherwise just Use of it. That great Controversy which broke out so early in the Church between the Judaizing and the Non-judaizing *Christians*, with the many Rules for Peace and *Christian* Condescension laid down by St. *Paul* in the managing of it, should be a lasting Lesson to us for Moderation, in treating one another in our far less considerable Differences; which, for want of the like *Christian* Spirit, we have carried to such unreasonable Heats and Divisions.

Thus much I thought proper to offer with relation to our Duty of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making*, as we are Members of the Church, or of an ecclesiastical Society; the Neglect of such useful Rules has filled the Church with so many Schisms and Divisions as rend it in sunder at this Day.

But as we are Members of the Church, we must remember that we are likewise Members of the State, and that there is a great Part of the Duty of *Peace-making* relates to our quiet Deportment under the several civil Governments we are Subjects of in the World. It is therefore a Thing of great Consequence that we have right

Notions

Notions of our Duty in this respect. I shall, as briefly as I can, guard you against some Principles which have been advanced, very destructive of the civil Peace, and at the same Time endeavour to principle you with true *Christian* Notions in those Matters, and so have done; for I perceive I shall get no further at this Time than the Description of the Duty of *Peace-making*.

1. *First*, then, One false Notion in this Matter is, that a great many Men have thought it was every one's Business to reform Abuses and Corruptions, not only in their own Station, (which would have been right,) but by invading the Stations of others, Magistrates, Legislators, Princes, and Governors; which is the High-way, instead of Peace, to drive all Things to Anarchy and Confusion. Now as God is a God of Order, our Religion requires that every Man keep within his own Sphere, and be not a Busy-body in other Men's Matters. If Grievances in any State cannot be remedied upon our humble Petition, private Men must wait patiently, and neither stir up Discontents against the Government, nor flee to Arms, or any other irregular Methods of Redress.

2. Some have had so wrong Notions of Gospel Liberty, as if it exempted them from the civil Duties they owe to their Superiors; nay, some have been carried to that Degree of fanatical Delusion, as to believe that Dominion is founded in Grace, and that this World, with the Possession and Government of it, belongs to the Saints, which Saints they take to be themselves: A Principle which would set all immediately in a Flame,
and

and turn the Kingdom of *Christ* into one of the worst worldly Kingdoms.

3. There are some who have so wrong Notions of the Power of human Governments; especially in the Externals and Ceremonials of Religion, that they think they can enjoin nothing but what is already enjoined by the Laws of God; whereas it is sufficient to recommend to us any human Laws in these Things, that they be not contrary or disagreeable to God's Laws, between which two Notions there is a very wide Difference.

4. There is both an active and a passive Obedience due to civil Governments, but the Rules and Measures of both have been very much mistaken and misrepresented, which has occasioned that the Doctrines themselves have been ridiculed in Theory, and utterly neglected in Practice, to the total Overthrow of all the Principles upon which the Peace of civil Governments doth subsist. The short of the Matter is, that whatever Form of civil Government is by Law established in any Country, the *Christian* Religion requires us to submit ourselves to it, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake. And therefore they who have pretended to flatter Princes, and to enslave Subjects, by endeavouring to prove from *Scripture* that it countenances no Government but that of absolute Monarchy, that is, Monarchy unlimited by any Laws, and that all People were obliged, either actively or passively, to obey not only the legal, but the arbitrary and illegal Commands of their Princes; have dangerously mistaken and misrepresented the *Christian* Doctrine, and brought a Scandal on our Religion, as if it enjoined the Doctrines of Tyranny and

Slavery, and tended to the utter Overthrow of Liberty and Property among Men: Whereas it is the established Laws and Constitution of every Country, which is the Rule both of our active and passive Obedience in that Country; and it is a great Mistake to think that the *Christian* Religion encroaches on any Man's or any Country's Liberty or Property, further than the Laws and Constitution of the several *Christian* Countries think fit to prescribe and direct. *Christianity* does indeed require our Obedience upon better Principles, I mean the Principles of Conscience, and upon a better Sanction, namely, that of eternal Rewards and Punishments; but still it is the same legal Obedience which is enjoined by the Laws and Constitution, and no other. And certainly passive Obedience and Non-resistance, in this Sense, are so far from being formidable or enslaving Doctrines, that they are no more, in effect, than if we should exhort Subjects to obey the Laws of their Country, in so far as they are not contrary to the Laws of God; and if they are contrary to any of God's Laws, or if they in their Conscience think them so, that then they should submit to the Penalty, and not rise in Rebellion against the Government: A Doctrine so necessary for the Support of all Governments, that it is not easy to conceive how they can subsist without it.

Perhaps it would not have been improper upon this Subject, to have considered not only, as I have now done, the Principles of *Peaceableness*, as we are Members of the Church, and Subjects of the State, to avoid Schism in the one, and Sedition in the other; but likewise the Peace of Families, Neighbourhoods, and lesser Corporations and Societies;

cieties; together with the common Differences, Controversies, and Law Suits, which are incident to disturb it: But besides that Time will not permit, I think it needless to enter further into these Things, seeing, for the clear understanding our Duty in all the various Cases which may happen, we want only a discreet Application of the general Rules of Peace, of which I discoursed at the last Occasion.

And therefore referring only the Promise here annexed to the *Peace-makers*, to another Opportunity, I shall now make an End of my Description of the Duty of *Peaceableness*; which I pray God so to engraft in all our Hearts, that we may not only live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty here upon Earth, but at last may attain to everlasting Peace and Rest with him in the Kingdom of Heaven, through the Mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour *Christ Jesus*. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XIV.

MAT. V. 9.

Blessed are the Peace-makers: For they shall be called the Children of God.

The Third Sermon on this Text.

NOT to trouble you with the Repetition of what I have in two former Discourses said upon these Words, it shall suffice to acquaint you that I have already dispatched,

1. The *first* Thing I proposed to consider from them ; namely, the Description of the Duty of *Peaceableness*, or *Peace-making*.

There are two Things more remain to be spoke to from the Words, both contained in the Promise annexed to this *Beatitude* ; namely,

2. What it is *to be called the Children of God*.

3. How *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* disposes and entitles us to this Privilege. Both which I intend, God willing, to discourse of at this Time.

The next Thing, then, we are to consider, is, the Meaning and Importance of this Privilege ; what it is *to be called the Children of God*. In order to which, there are these *three* Things will be proper to be enquired into.

I. What is the Meaning of being *the Children of God*.

II. What is the Meaning of being *called the Children of God*.

III. How this is verified of the *Peace-makers*, that *they shall be called the Children of God*.

I. *First*, We are to enquire what is meant by being *the Children of God*. In the *Scripture* Phrase they are figuratively denominated the Children of any Person, who resemble that Person in his Qualities, good or bad: Thus the Children of *Abraham* are they who imitate the Faith of *Abraham*; Children of *Belial* are wicked Men, who take after a wicked Person. In this Sense a Child of God is one who imitates God in his imitable Perfections; one that has many God-like Qualities, bearing a Resemblance to those which are in God himself, by which he is so gracious and beneficial to Mankind. See *Luke* vi. 35. Another Notion of it is they who are beloved of God, *Luke* xx. 36.

II. *Secondly*, We are to enquire what it is to be *called the Children of God*. This may denote,
1. The honourable Esteem such Persons meet with among good Men in this World. 2. The favourable Approbation of God himself, with the Rewards of Grace here, and Glory hereafter.

III. We are to enquire how this is verified of the *Peace-makers*, that *they shall be called the Children of God*. To this I shall answer in the following Propositions,

1. *First*, That *they shall be called the Children of God* may denote the high Esteem they shall be

in among good Men, and the honourable Compellations which shall be given them in the Church, who are of such a peaceable, healing Spirit. The Apostle *St. Paul*, in a Discourse in which he recommends this peaceable Spirit, *Rom. xiv.* uses this Argument for Peace, That as it is a Thing acceptable to God, so it is approved of Men. *Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 19.* *For the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, saith he, but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these Things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men. Let us therefore follow the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another.* And *Phil. ii. 14, 15.* he insinuates plainly what a shining Honour and Glory this Virtue of *Peaceableness* will give them in the World. *Do all Things without Murmurs and Disputings; that ye may be blameless, and harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke in the Mids of a crooked and perverse Generation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World.* And in the third Chapter of that same Epistle he advises, that a particular Mark of Honour should be put on them who were of this peaceable Spirit. *Ver. 16, 17.* *Nevertheless, says he, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing. Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an Ensamble.* And as he advises to put a Mark of Honour on those who were peaceable, so elsewhere he advises to put a particular Mark of Dishonour on the Enemies of Peace, and the Fomenters of Divisions. *Rom. xvi. 17.* *Now I beseech you, Brethren, says he, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine*

Strife which ye have learned, and avoid them. So that it is plain that *Christ* and his Apostles designed and expected that Persons of a peaceable Temper and Disposition should be had in particular Estimation in the Church, as being *Children of God*, resembling God and our Master *Christ*.

2. *Secondly*, Their being called *the Children of God* may denote that this Virtue of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* is a sure Mark of a Child of God, and that where-ever it is found, it shall be owned as such, both by God and Men. *In this the Children of God are manifest*, saith St. John, *and the Children of the Devil: Whosoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother*, 1 John iii. 10. *If ye have bitter Envying and Strife in your Hearts*, saith St. James, Jam. iii. 14. *glory not and lie not against the Truth; this Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where Envying and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work. But the Wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, &c.*

3. *Thirdly*, The *Peaceable* and *Peace-makers* may be understood to be called the Sons of God, by the Testimony and Approbation God gives them, owning them as his Sons, by the large Gift of *Christian* Graces he bestows upon them here, and by the Assignment of the Inheritance, the Children's Portion hereafter.

1. *First*, He bestows upon them a very large Gift of *Christian* Graces here. This one *Christian* Virtue has so many good Qualities ingredient in it, or by God's Blessing usually annexed, that if we put them together, they will amount to an ample Declaration in favour of the *peace-*

able and peace-making Person, that he is a Child of God. I shall reckon up some of the chief of them, from which it may be easily gathered that this *Peaceableness* is a great Bundle, in which all other Virtues are bound up; and that it may deservedly be called *the Bond of Peace*, as well because it ties Virtues, as Persons together.

(1.) *First*, then, The *peaceable* Man enjoys a great deal of inward Tranquility and Freedom from disturbing and distracting Lusts and Passions; whereas *the wicked is like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked, Isa. lvii. 20.*

(2.) The *peaceable* Man is much in the Exercise of Devotion of all sorts, both for God's Assistance to the Success of his lawful Endeavours, and for his Blessing to Princes and other subordinate Magistrates, whose chief Business it is to promote, and preserve Peace and good Order in the World. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. *I exhort therefore, saith St. Paul, that first of all Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men: For Kings, and all that are in Authority; to what End? that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty.*

(3.) The *peaceable* Man is commonly endowed with Prudence, having a wise Foresight of the Evil of Divisions, and therefore he avoids them as much as is possible; whereas the contentious hasty Man involves himself in Quarrels before he considers, or is aware of the Consequences. *He that is slow to Wrath, saith Solomon, is of great Understanding; but he that is hasty of Spirit exalteth Folly, Prov. xiv. 29.* And in another Place
of

XIV.] *the Children of God*, Mat. V. 9. 265
of the same Chapter, *He that is soon angry deal-
eth foolishly.*

(4.) The *peaceable Man* is commonly blest'd with those Characters of *Christ* himself, *Meekness and Humility*; the contrary of which *Solomon* observes to be the Occasions of Strife. (a) *Only by Pride cometh Contention; but with the well advised is Wisdom.* And again, (b) *A soft Answer turneth away Wrath, but grievous Words stir up Anger.*

(5.) Together with this of *Meekness*, we may join the good Government of the Tongue, as an excellent Mark of a Child of God, with which the *peaceable Man* is blest'd. *St. James* tells us, Chap. i. 26. *If any Man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, this Man's Religion is vain.* And *Solomon* has several Remarks of the *peaceable Man's* excelling in this Talent. In general he observes, of the Man that governs his Tongue, that he keeps himself out of Trouble. *Whoso keepeth his Mouth and his Tongue, saith he, keepeth his Soul from Trouble*, Prov. xxi. 23. Particularly he observes, that he abstains from those Follies and Vices of the Tongue, which commonly create Contention, such as is the meddling Temper, Prov. xxvi. 17. *He that passeth by, and meddleth with Strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a Dog by the Ears.* And the whispering Tale-bearing Temper, Prov. xxvi. 20. *Where no Wood is, the Fire goeth out; so where there is no Tale-bearer, the Strife ceaseth.* And elsewhere he observes, that the *Whisperer separateth chief Friends.* And the blabbing leaky Temper, which can keep no Secrets, Prov. xi. 13. *A Tale-bearer revealeth Se-
crets:*

(a) Prov. xiii. 10.

(b) Prov. xv. 1.

cretis: but he that is of a faithful Spirit, concealeth the Matter. And the hasty Temper, Prov. xii. 16. A Fool's Wrath is presently known. And the satyrical Temper, Prov. xxvi. 18. As a mad Man who casteth Firebrands, Arrows, and Death: So is the Man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and saith, am not I in jest? And the insulting Temper, Prov. xxi. 24. Proud and haughty Scorners is his Name who dealeth in proud Wrath. And the furious Temper, Prov. xxii. 24. Make no Friendship with an angry Man, and with a furious Man thou shalt not go.

(6.) The *peaceable* Man is commonly a just Man, and far from offering any Injury to his Neighbour; he is not for breaking into old Settlements, or for removing the ancient Landmarks, *Prov. xxii. 28.*

(7.) The *peaceable* Man is a charitable Man in treating an Enemy. *Solomon* observes, that he neither takes Fire quickly, nor thinks it so much Honour to retaliate, as to pardon an Injury. *Prov. xix. 11. The Discretion of a Man deferreth his Anger, and it is his Glory to pass over a Transgression.*

(8.) The *peaceable* Man is very well qualified for preserving Friendship, as not easily taking Exceptions, and shewing a Readiness for mutual good Offices, as knowing that *he who hath Friends must shew himself friendly, Prov. xviii. 24.*

(9.) *Peaceableness* goes a great way in the Composition of the Happiness of the married State, making the most ordinary Circumstances go down with Pleasure and Contentment. For *better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a stalled Ox and Hatred therewith, Prov. xv. 17.*

(10.) The

(10.) The same Temper has a visible Tendency to Loyalty and the Peace of all Societies, both sacred and civil. For it is a Temper which doth not care to *meddle with them that are given to change*.

(11.) *Lastly*, The *peaceable* Man has a good Government of himself. For it is the same Stayedness, and Moderation of Spirit, which keeps a Man from falling out with others, that makes him easy in himself, and helps him on all Occasions to preserve his Temper.

2. As God owns the *peaceable* Man for his Child, by the large Portion of *Christian* Graces he bestows upon him in this Life; so he will likewise own him by the eternal Inheritance, the Children's Portion he will bestow upon him in Heaven. At the great Day of Accounts they shall be signally owned as the Children of God, in the Presence of Men and Angels; when their Labours of Love, their Patience of Injuries, their keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, and all the other blessed Fruits and Effects of their *peaceable* and reconciling Tempers, shall be honourably acknowledged by our great Lord and Master *Jesus Christ*, as the surest Marks of his Disciples and Followers, and rewarded accordingly. And this I take to be the principal Sense in which this Promise is verified to the *Peacemakers*, even that great Declaration which shall be made in their Favour at the great Day of Judgment, determining who are, and who are not the Children of God; and who shall be admitted to, and who excluded from the Inheritance prepared for them. *They are made equal to the Angels, and are the Children of God, being the Children of the*
Resur-

Resurrection, Luke xx. 36. So much for the first Thing I proposed to consider from this Promise in the Text, what it is to be called the Sons of God.

3. The next is, to enquire how *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* disposes and entitles us to this Privilege. For clearing this Matter, I shall

1. Shew how this Temper makes us resemble God.

2. How it disposes us for the Reception of those Graces which are the peculiar Characters of the Children of God here, and for that eternal Happiness which is prepared for them in Heaven.

3. What Promises God has made of that Happiness to the *peaceable* and *Peace-makers*.

First, I am to shew how this Temper of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* is a Resemblance of God; for I told you before, that, in the Scripture Phrase, they are said to be the Children of any Person, who resemble him in his Qualities, good or bad. Now the *Peace-maker* doth very much resemble God in his gracious Dispensations towards the Children of Men; for is it not the great Work and Design which God has been carrying on by the Ministry of his Son and Servants, the Business of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, of *Christ* and the *Apostles*, and of all who have succeeded them in the Care of Souls, to make Peace between God and Man? This is all our Business to reconcile you to God, and therefore *Peace-makers* and Reconcilers in so far resemble God Almighty; they are acted by the same Spirit, and therefore may be called the Sons of God; As martial Men we call the Sons of *Mars*; voluptuous Men the Sons of *Venus*; learned Men the Sons of *Apollo*;

so *peaceable* Men the Sons of God. And to cast further Light on this Notion, it is to be observed, that one of the Titles God takes to himself, by which he is often stiled in the *New Testament*, is that of *the God of Peace*; and *Christ* is called *the Prince of Peace*: And therefore *Peace-makers* are the Sons of this God.

Again, As one great Part of God's Work is to reconcile us to himself, so another Part of it is to reconcile us to one another: The great Partition Wall between *Jew* and *Gentile* is now pulled down; all Differences among Men, occasioned by Birth and Ceremony, are now abolished; all Men are now invited to a Participation of the Benefits of the Gospel; the Legacy left by *Christ* to his Disciples, is that of Love and Peace. Pride, and Self-love, and Self-seeking, and every Thing else which is inconsistent with this Spirit, is the most directly levelled at, to be battered and beat down by the *Christian* Morals: So that there is nothing has been more laboured by God than the establishing of Peace in the World, that he may well be called *the God of Peace*, and *Peace-makers* his Children.

Secondly, *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* disposes us for the Reception of those Graces which are the peculiar Characters of the Children of God here, and, likewise, for that eternal Happiness which is prepared for them in Heaven. It is very remarkable what the Psalmist saith to this Purpose, Psal. xxv. 9. *The Meek will he guide in Judgment, and the Meek will he teach his Way*: Intimating the Necessity of avoiding Anger and Contention, in order to our receiving the Influences of God's holy Spirit. The same is held forth

forth in a pretty Allusion, 1 Kings xi. 11, 12, 13. where, in a Vision of God to the Prophet *Elijah*, it is observed, that as the Lord assed by, *there was a great and strong Wind, who rent the Mountains; but the Lord was not in the Wind: And after the Wind an Earthquake, but the Lord was not in the Earthquake: And after the Earthquake a Fire, but the Lord was not in the Fire: And after the Fire a still small Voice. Then the Lord spake.* Teaching us, that it is not in the Heats and Noise of Contention, but in Peace and Silence, that God visits us, and teaches us his Truths. And, for the future State of Felicity, what can dispose us better for it than a *peaceable* Temper, whether we consider the Relation we shall there stand in to God, or to our fellow Creatures, or the inward Peace and Tranquility of our own Minds. For, 1. What can better dispose us for the Happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven, than such a *peaceable* Disposition as will prepare us, with the profoundest Veneration, Love, and Obedience, to comply readily with all the Dictates of Almighty God? Was not the want of this, which threw the apostate Angels out of those heavenly Mansions, even their unpeaceable Spirit, which disposed them to Rebellion against God? What can be more necessary to the Happiness of the Subjects of any Society, than the Wisdom and Goodness of the Governors, and the Quietness and *Peaceableness* of the Governed? No doubt that will be one great Part of the Felicity of Heaven, that as they shall be governed by unerring Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, so they will be all so sensible of the Happiness of such a Government, that there will not be

be the least unpeaceable Principle or Practice among any of the blessed Subjects of it; but the wise Commands of God shall be attended with a peaceable and ready Compliance of all the Inhabitants of that *New Jerusalem*. 2. If we consider the Relation we shall then stand in to our fellow Creatures, the Saints and Angels, who shall be joined with us in the Society of that blessed Kingdom, who are called *the Sons of God*, Job xxxviii. 7. with relation to them, I say, what Duty more proper, than Peace and Harmony, Love and Friendship? This, no doubt, will add very considerably to the Felicity of that blessed State, that *there* will be no Contentions, Animosities, or Divisions, but we shall have the Pleasure of dwelling together like Brethren in Unity; and therefore there can be nothing more necessary to dispose and qualify us for this Society of the Sons of God in Heaven, than the Exercise of this blessed Temper of *Peaceableness* and *Peace-making* upon Earth. 3. If we regard the inward Peace and Tranquility of our own Minds, which is a principal and most essential Ingredient in all Happiness; we shall find, that nothing contributes more to it than *Peaceableness*: For that is essential to Contentment, which is the Life of Happiness itself. And I know no greater Commendation of Religion in general, than that it lays all the intestine Commotions between our Reason and our Lusts; that it satisfies all our Desires, by fixing our Hearts on the chief Good; and that it confers upon us that Peace of Conscience which is a continual Feast: In short, that, as the Psalmist says, *Great Peace have they, who love God's Law, and nothing shall offend them.*

And

And if this inward Peace is so great a Blessing here, how much greater will it be in Heaven, both because our Conquests over our Lusts shall then be incomparably more perfect, whereas here it is often doubtful; and because it will be then perfectly secure, free from all Fear of Relapse?

Lastly, Peaceableness entitles us to the Privilege of being adjudged the Sons of God, because the Inheritance due to God's Children is promised to them. Among the other Blessings of the *peaceable* Temper, *Psal. cxxxiii. 3.* it is said of it, *that God commanded his Blessing to attend it, even Life for evermore.* And among the Things which exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven, *Gal. v. 20.* are reckoned up *Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, and Strife*; of all which it is there said, as well as of the other Works of the Flesh, *that they who do such Things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And what can be more express than my Text? *Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called, that is, adjudged, the Children of God.*

Seeing, then, this Virtue of *Peaceableness* or *Peace-making* has so great an Influence on our Felicity, let us with the utmost Care apply ourselves to the Study and Practice of it. There is, indeed, one great Part of the Peace of Mankind which depends so much on the higher Powers of the Earth, that we can contribute little more towards it, than, as the Apostle exhorts, by our Prayers for them, *that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.* As for the Peace of the Country where we live, we can to our Prayers add our earnest Endeavours in our several Stations, to remove the Occasions of Differences,

ences, and to keep up a good Understanding both with our Rulers and Fellow-Subjects. As to the Peace of the Neighbourhood, we can do still a great deal more, by discountenancing all factious, Tale-bearing, and malicious Persons, and by promoting Love and good Neighbourhood, both by our Discourse and Example. As to the Peace of Families, there is nothing more necessary, than that we all study to curb our Passions, and, whether we govern, or obey, that we do it with a Spirit of Meekness. And, lastly, in order to all these, we are to endeavour after an inward Tranquility of Mind, and the keeping of a good Conscience, which is always attended with Chearfulness and Peace. Now the God of Love and Peace be with us all in *Christ Jesus*. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XV.

MAT. V. 10.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Ver. 11. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.

Ver. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

The First Sermon on this Text.

IN these Words our Saviour pronounces his last Beatitude to those who are duly passive or patient when they are persecuted for Righteousness sake; assuring us, that this is the Character of the Members of his Kingdom. He insists, likewise, on the Application of this Beatitude to his then Disciples, foretelling that Persecution for his sake should be their Lot, directing them in it, and comforting them under it, from the Example of the Prophets which went before them.

This Beatitude was most proper to come last, and to crown all the rest, being indeed the most difficult and the most perfect of all, and what was absolutely necessary towards the Preservation

of all the rest: It would have been in vain to have taught them the other *Christian* Virtues contained in the other Beatitudes, if he had not taught them likewise how to preserve them, by adhering to the Profession and Practice of what they had learned, notwithstanding the ill Usage they were to meet with from the World on account of it.

In this, likewise, as much as in any of the former, our Saviour meets with one of the most rooted Prejudices, and bad Dispositions, as to the *Messiah* and his Kingdom; for the *Jews* dreamt of no other than of a fighting, conquering, and triumphing *Messiah*, and had not the least Notion of the Cross, or of his Disciples and Followers suffering with him, or for him: And therefore it was highly necessary to teach them this Doctrine, that they might not be surprized, and fall off, when they should come to be assaulted with Sufferings for *Christ* and their Duty.

But as this was one of the hardest Lessons our Saviour had to teach his Disciples, and as they were the most unprepared for it, it is very observable how he sugars this bitter Pill, which was to convey so wholesome, but so unpleasant a Medicine, delivering it attended with such particular great Promises, and recommended with such Encomiums, as might pre-engage their Esteem and Affection for this Virtue, as giving them a Rank amongst the most honourable Company upon Earth, that of *the Prophets*, and entitling them to the highest Place in the Favour of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Words we may observe these three Heads of Discourse, which I intend particularly to consider, as they lie in Order.

I. A Blessing pronounced in general to all that are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

II. A plain Insinuation and Prediction that the State of Persecution for Christ's sake should be the Lot of these his Disciples and Followers. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

III. Our Saviour's Directions to a patient and chearful Deportment in such persecuted Circumstances, and the great Comforts he suggests under them. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

I. We have here a Blessing pronounced in general to all that are persecuted for Righteousness sake; *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* In which Words there are *three* Things proper to be consider'd.

1. What is the Meaning of the Virtue here described, *the being persecuted for Righteousness sake.*

2. What is the Meaning of the Reward annexed, that *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

3. What Relation this Virtue has to this Reward, *viz.* How Persecution for Righteousness sake both qualifies us for, and entitles us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us consider what is the Meaning of the Virtue here described, *the being persecuted for*
Righ-

Righteousness sake. And this I shall again comprehend in these *three*.

1. The *Honesty* of the Cause, *for Righteousness sake*; that is, for doing of their Duty.

2. Their *Firmness* and *Resoluteness* in this good Way, that Persecution doth not terrify them from it.

3. Their *Patience*, that being the only Weapon they make use of, and not *Resistance*, to entitle them to this Perfection and Reward of Martyrdom.

First, If we would know what belongs to the Virtue here recommended, I mean the Virtue of Martyrdom, we must be sure that we suffer *for a good Cause, and the Testimony of a good Conscience*; that is what our Saviour means by *Righteousness sake*. Our Suffering must be *for doing our Duty*. No Body fancies that suffering for notorious Crimes falls under this Denomination; yet it happens, sometimes, that, in case of an erroneous deluded Conscience, many real Crimes are committed, as our Saviour foretold that the Time would come, when, by killing his Disciples, Men should believe they did God Service. No doubt St. *Paul*, when, acted by a false Zeal, he violently persecuted the *Christians*, thought he did right to stop a growing Heresy, and to maintain the Honour of the Law of *Moses*, and of that particular Sect of the *Pharisees* among whom he was bred; tho' when he came afterwards to be better instructed he himself gave this his false Zeal no better Names than those of Blasphemy, Injuriousness, and Persecution. And if those forty Men, and upwards, mentioned *Acts xxiii.*

12. who bound themselves with a Curse that they

would neither eat nor drink till they had killed *Paul*, had accomplish'd their Design, and had suffer'd for it, their blind Zeal, and the Erroneousness of their Consciences, tho' strengthen'd with an Oath and Covenant, could never have made this in them a *suffering for Righteousness sake*. How far God may pardon an ignorant blind Zeal, is to us unknown; but it is very unreasonable to think he will reward it, far less with that highest Reward in Glory which is immediately promis'd here to Martyrs. Two Things, then, as far as I can perceive, are required, as to this Point of the Cause, for which we are to suffer; namely, that it be a worthy good Cause in itself, and that our Suffering be likewise sincere, with a pure Eye to God, and not govern'd, or chiefly influenc'd, with other carnal Ends and Regards; such as Pride and Vanity, Faction and Party, or indiscreet Zeal in drawing the Sufferings upon ourselves by other Provocations. In short, then, we are neither entitled to this Beatitude when we have a wrong Cause, tho' we mean well, and have a good, but an erroneous Conscience; nor when we have a good Cause, but not a good Conscience towards God, nor carry ourselves dutifully and peaceably towards Men. The most usual good Causes for which we may venture to suffer, and, if our Intentions are right, may promise ourselves that our Sufferings will be approved and accepted by God, are these three: 1. As to our Faith, when we suffer for owning, professing, and adhering to the *Christian* Religion, or any fundamental Article thereof. 2. As to our Practice, when we suffer for doing any thing expressly commanded by God, or for refusing

refusing to do any thing expressly prohibited by him. 3. When we suffer for not admitting doubtful or erroneous Opinions as Doctrines of the *Christian* Faith. The first of these, indeed, is but seldom now the Occasion of Persecution, as it generally was of old, before we had so many *Christian* Kingdoms and Commonwealths, at least the Sufferings of *Christians* as such are seldom to Blood; it is more the strict Practice, than the Profession of *Christianity*, which is now persecuted; and the Persecutors, instead of professed *Pagans*, are mere nominal *Christians*, who are little better; and, instead of a Persecution to Blood, it is only a Persecution which reaches their good Name, or outward Estates and Preferments. The *second* sort of Persecution is more common, I mean that which is for doing *Christian* Duties, or for not doing something prohibited by God. Thus of old *John the Baptist* was a Martyr for reprehending *Herod* for his incestuous Marriage; and of later Years how many have undergone sharp Persecutions for using a Bible in the vulgar Tongue, or for not adoring a consecrated Wafer, and for divers other Points of pretended Duty or Worship? The *third* sort, too, is too common a Ground of Persecution, when we are persecuted for not admitting erroneous or doubtful Opinions, as Articles of Faith; for the same Fidelity to *Christ*, which makes us steadfast in the Profession or Practice of known Truths and Duties, should likewise guard us against any additional Doctrines of *Christianity* more than have been deliver'd us by *Christ* and his Apostles. For as it is fully as great a Crime to counterfeit a King's Seal to give Authority to pretended In-

structions which never came from him, as it is to disobey those which come stamped with Royal Authority; so it is as great a Crime to admit the Inventions of Men as Doctrines of *Christianity*, as it is to deny our Assent or Obedience to such Doctrines, or Rules of Life, as were undoubtedly delivered by *Christ*: Not but that several indifferent Things may be admitted as Matters of Decency and Expediency, yet not as Doctrines of *Christianity*, for Assertion of which he would have us expose ourselves to Suffering. So far from it, that it is a most justifiable Cause of Suffering, rather to undergo it, than to admit of the Inventions of Men to be impos'd upon us as *Christian* Doctrines. So much for the Goodness of the Cause which is the principal Ingredient in this Virtue, that the Suffering be for *Righteousness* sake.

The *Second* Thing to be consider'd in this Virtue, is, the *Firmness* and *Resolution of Mind* in adhering to this righteous Cause, and in not being terrified from it by the bitterest and sharpest Persecution. This is a very great and most difficult Piece of Virtue, when, to the Difficulties in the Nature of the Virtue itself, there is an Addition of other external Difficulties, enough to distract the Minds, and to overcome the Courage and Patience of any Men who have but common Resolution. There is nothing but a superior Fear of God which can overcome this Fear of Man; and the Pains of Persecution being both sharp and present, it must require a very firm Belief of the absent Promises, to bear up against the Terrors, and Pains, and lingering Torments of Persecution. It is certain, then, that the Mean-
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ing of pronouncing a Blessing to them who are persecuted for Righteousness sake, is so to be understood, provided they continue stedfast in their righteous Profession and Practice, notwithstanding all such ill Usage and Persecution.

Thirdly, To entitle one to that high Pitch of Virtue called *Martyrdom*, it is necessary, that, besides a good Cause, and a good Courage and Resolution to adhere to it, we be purely *passive* under the Persecution. I mean, that we do not fly to the Arms of Resistance; for if we do, whatever the Cause is, we can't, I think, be entitled to Martyrdom, when we are only worsted, as being inferior in Strength; but when we suffer patiently and chearfully in a good Cause, and do not endeavour to repel Force with Force, this is the true Suffering of Martyrs. To conclude, then, the Description of this Virtue; It is such a prevalent Love to God, or to our Duty for his sake, that no Hardship shall beat us from the Practice of our Duty; but that we chuse rather patiently to suffer, than sin. This is the Notion of this Virtue in general; but we may come to a more distinct Knowledge of it, by considering more particularly the particular Acts and Expressions of it, the chief of which are these following:

1. In order to this Patience and Constancy under Persecution, there should be a deliberate Forecasting in our Minds of all the Hazards attending every Duty in particular, and our *Christian* Profession in general. We should sit down and count what the Cost will amount to of this spiritual Building we are going about; to what Losses, Afflictions, and Crosses, it will probably expose us, in carrying it on to Perfection. This
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is a Doctrine very much inculcated by our Saviour and his Apostles, and absolutely necessary indeed towards rencountering so great Difficulties as every good *Christian* has, or may have to struggle with. And in this serious Deliberation and Resolution we should take a View not only of the common Troubles which attend the Profession and Practice of *Christianity*, such as flow from the Practices and Combinations of Men possess'd with a wicked, worldly, or carnal Spirit, who in all Times are Enemies to serious Piety; but we should likewise forecast in our Minds, how possible it is that some Time or other Atheism or Heresy may get into the Throne, and that either the civil or ecclesiastical Powers may be Encouragers of Vice or Error, and declar'd Enemies to Virtue and Truth; nay, how possible it is that such a Zeal for Error or Idolatry may prevail, that Men will think they do God good Service by raising bloody Persecutions against the true Church, which they think the heretical one: Nay, further, we should bring the Matter yet more home to ourselves, and every one ask himself the Question, If I must either renounce *Christianity* in general, or some considerable Truth, or Duty of it in particular, or endure the Loss of all Places and Preferments, the Forfeiture of my Estate, the Banishment, Imprisonment, Famishing, Torturing, or Death of my Person; which should I chuse? Could I be faithful to the Death, that I might obtain a Crown of Life?

2. To this Deliberation of the Mind counting the Cost, it is necessary there be added, especially in Times of Danger, an Expectation of Sufferings, and a steady Resolution to bear them patiently

tiently and chearfully when they come, in Hope of a glorious Immortality. We have a noble Example of this in the Apostle St. *Paul*, Acts xx. 22, 23, 24. *And now behold*, says he, *I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the Things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me. But none of these Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my Course with Joy.* This is the taking up of the Cross, and the embracing of it *deliberatione Animi*, with a deliberate Purpose and Resolution of Heart, which, no doubt, whether ever such Sufferings befall us or not, will be accepted by God, who judges of Men by the Heart, and not by the casual Events of Life.

3. To this Virtue of patient bearing of Persecution, there must concur a great Degree of Faith in God's good Providence, which over-rules all the sinful Wills of Men, and sanctifies to his true Servants what the World designs for their Plague and Misery, so as to make it exceeding useful and wholesome to their Souls. Ungodly Men look no further in their Troubles than to the immediate Instruments of them, and against them they vent their Rage; like the Dog who flies at the Stone which is thrown at him, without minding the Hand that threw it: But a true Believer takes all as out of the Hand of God, without regarding much the inferior Instruments of his Sufferings. Thus *David*, when cursed by *Shimei*, *So let him curse*, says he, *for the Lord hath said to him, curse David*, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. And thus our blessed Saviour, at the Approach of his Passion, in which there were many wicked Instruments, over-look-
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ing all them, looked up to his Father in Heaven, saying, *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11.

4. One noble Ingredient in this Duty of patient Suffering for Righteousness sake, which comes in to animate and hearten them to undergo the Difficulties of it, is, the having an Eye to the noble Troops in which they serve, I mean the Consideration of that noble Army of Martyrs which have most patiently suffered such great Things for the Testimony of a good Conscience, and especially the looking at our blessed Saviour *Jesus Christ* at the Head of them, who gave us such a noble Example of Suffering, I find these two joined together in an Exhortation to Patience, *Heb. xii. i.* where, after a great Catalogue of Martyrs and Confessors reckoned up in the foregoing Chapter, the Apostle exhorts thus in the Beginning of that 12th Chapter: *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Martyrs, let us lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God. For consider him that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your Minds.*

5. All this must be follow'd with a firm Resolution, by the Help of God, to follow our Duty and Conscience, be the Hazard what it will. The greatest Danger we are in from Sufferings, is from the sudden Surprize of them; but a steady Reso-

Resolution, formed upon a full Prospect of the Danger, can, with the Assistance of God's Grace, do great Matters. It is in vain that we contemplate the Examples of *Christ* and the Apostles and Martyrs, if we are not excited thereby to fortify ourselves to the same Patience and Resolution with them, as far at least as our lower Talents and Degrees of Grace will admit. And therefore let us be exhorted in the Words of St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 1. *Forasmuch as Christ hath suffered for us in the Flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same Mind.* And in the Words of St. Paul, Heb. vi. 12. *That ye be not slothful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.* And Eph. vi. 10. *Finally, my Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil.—Take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil Day, and having done all to stand.* Nor must we count it enough to form these Resolutions once; we should frequently renew them, especially as there is either a fresh Prospect of Danger, or a Sense of our own Lapses and Infirmities; for both which we have the Example of St. Peter, first upon the Prospect of Danger. 1 Pet. iv. 12. *Beloved, says he, think it not strange concerning the fiery Trial which is to try you, as tho' some strange Thing happened to you; but rejoice inasmuch as ye are Partakers of Christ's Sufferings; that when his Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy.* Then, as to a Sense of his Failings and Infirmities, we have him upon his Denial of his

Master, *going out and weeping bitterly*, Mat. xxvi. 75. and renewing himself by Repentance.

6. To a Strength of Resolution in a right *Christian* Martyr, is join'd an humble Sense of the Feebleness of all our own Endeavours without the Assistance, the extraordinary Assistance of the Grace of God; and therefore from this Sense he is most assiduous and importunate at the Throne of Grace, for Grace to help in that Time of Need. Thus we find the Apostle St. *Paul*, Eph. vi. 18. after he had animated the *Christian* with Courage, that he should be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might; and had likewise armed him from Head to Foot with the whole Armour of God, concludes with the Necessity of Prayer; both our own Prayers for ourselves, and our mutual Prayers for one another, and our Perseverance and Continuance therein, that we may resolutely hold out to the End. *Praying always*, says he, *with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance, and Supplication for all Saints.*

7. I shall add but one Thing more in the Description of this Duty of Patience under Persecution, namely, that we should train ourselves to it, by accustoming ourselves to all Acts of Self-denial, and bearing of the Cross in Time of our outward Peace and Quiet, that so in the Day of Persecution we may be found like well-trained Soldiers, who are not to seek, but understand all the Points of their Exercise and Discipline. So St. *Paul* tells us of himself, that as they who strove for Victory in the Olympick Games kept a good Government of themselves, and trained themselves

themselves to long Wind and Hardship; so he kept under his Body, and brought it into Subjection to the Spirit, lest his Life should contradict his Doctrine, to the endangering of his own Salvation. *Every Man that striveth for the Mastery, says he, is temperate in all Things: Now they do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: So fight I, not as one that beateth the Air: But I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection: Lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away,* 1 Cor. ix. 25, &c. There is nothing more necessary for us than that we should thus learn to bear the daily Crosses which befall us, while we do our Duty. So says our Saviour, Luke ix. 23. *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow me.* He that indulges himself so much, that he can't bear the smallest Injury or Affront, and is out of Patience at every the least Disappointment, and knows not what it is to refuse a Temptation to Pleasure, tho' at the Expence of his Duty and Conscience; he that rather than be out of the Fashion, or bear a little Shame of lewd profane Company, will run into any manner of Extravagance, and sacrifice every thing that ought to be dearest to an honest and good Man; he that in these little Things will undergo no Shame or Trouble for *Christ*, how will he do if he should be called forth to lose all, Estate, and Friends, and Life itself, for his Duty, which was often the Case of the primitive *Christians*?

Thus far I have given you a Description of the Duty of *suffering for Righteousness sake*, in which
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I have not tied up myself to those Things that are essential to the Duty, but have taken the Liberty to put in such Actions as are the usual Adjuncts and Concomitants of it, that ye may understand and learn it the better. Time will not allow our considering of the Reward annexed, nor the Relation of the one to the other ; which I must therefore refer to another Opportunity.

I pray God to bless what we have heard, and to give us a right Understanding in all Things, through *Jesus Christ* our blessed Mediator and Redeemer. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XVI.

M A T. V. 10.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Ver. 11. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

Ver. 12. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

IN a former Discourse on these Words, there were three Things I propos'd to be considered from them.

1. The Virtue here recommended, *the being persecuted for Righteousness sake.*

2. The Reward annexed, *the Kingdom of Heaven.*

3. The Relation between this Virtue and this Reward; or how Persecution for Righteousness sake both qualifies us for, and entitles us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Having at that time consider'd the first of these, the Virtue here recommended, I proceed now to the other two, the Reward annexed, and the Relation the Virtue has to the Reward.

The Reward annexed is, *the Kingdom of Heaven*; by which Expression is commonly meant, in the *New Testament*, the Gospel State, or the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, with all the Privileges of Grace and Glory annex'd. And I see not why this common Acceptation will not suit well in this Place. And it signifies, that they who patiently suffer in a good Cause, and for the Testimony of a good Conscience, are κατ' ἐξοχην, in a most eminent manner the genuine Disciples of *Christ*, and shall be admitted to an high Degree of Glory. By this Expression, *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, there are these three Truths intimated: 1. That *Persecution* will be the Lot of the Disciples of the *Messiah*. 2. That in this persecuted State the Graces of the Gospel shall appear in them very eminently conspicuous. 3. That they shall be advanc'd to an high Degree of Glory in Heaven.

1. It is intimated, that *Persecution* will be the Lot of the Disciples of the *Messiah*: For by saying that the *Kingdom of Heaven*, or the *Kingdom of the Messiah*, is *theirs*, this must needs imply so much. There wants nothing to make out this, except to observe, that it is all one Thing in the Gospels, to say the *Kingdom of Heaven*, and the *Kingdom of Christ*, or the *Messiah*, and the *Kingdom of God*. These Phrases, I say, are us'd promiscuously, and one of the first Lessons we are taught by this Expression in the Text is, that the Gospel State will not be, as they fancied, a State of worldly Prosperity, but a State of *Persecution*; and that they who patiently and chearfully undergo it have a good Title, and are well qualified for the heavenly Felicity.

2. It is intimated, that under this State of the Cross all Gospel Graces shall appear very eminent and conspicuous, which follows upon the entitling such Persons to an eminent Station both in the Kingdom of Grace and Glory.

3. It is intimated, that proportionably to their Degree of patient Suffering, so shall be the Degree of Glory to which they shall be advanc'd; for it is said, with a peculiar Emphasis, that *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*, q. d. They of all Men have a peculiar Right and Title to it. But because these Things are more plainly express'd in the following Parts of our Saviour's Application of this Beatitude, whereas they are contain'd here more by Implication, I shall delay the Consideration of them till we come to that Application. In the mean Time, I go on to

The *Third* Thing I observ'd in the Words, namely, the Relation this Virtue has to this Reward. And this, I think, will require the shewing these two Things.

I. That patient Suffering for *Righteousness sake* is a true Character and proper Qualification of a genuine Disciple of *Christ's* here on Earth.

II. That it entitles and qualifies him for everlasting Glory and Happiness in Heaven.

I. That patient Suffering for *Righteousness sake* is a true Character and proper Qualification of a genuine Disciple of *Christ* here on Earth. And here now, that I may shew how near this Spirit of Suffering approaches to the very Heart of the *Christian* Religion, I shall first instance in some Virtues appertaining to it, or rather concurring

in the Composition of it, on account of which, it deserves the highest Regard; then I shall consider what blessed Consequences it is attended with.

I begin with the Virtues concurring in the Composition of it; of which,

1. The *first* I shall name, is Faith unfeigned, of which this patient resolute Suffering is a good Evidence. Faith being a Belief of, and Regard to the Promises of God, especially such of them as have not their Accomplishment in this Life, is that Grace and Virtue which doth chiefly fortify *Christ's* Martyrs in all their Sufferings. It is this steady looking at the Joy set before us, and at *Jesus*, who has those Rewards in his Hands, that enables us to endure the Cross, and despise the Shame. We find it all along ascribed to Faith, in that long Catalogue of Confessors and Martyrs which we have *Heb. xi.* that Afflictions, with the People of God; were preferr'd to the Pleasures of Sin, and that the ancient Martyrs *had Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, of Bonds and Imprisonment; that they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword; that they wandered about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;* all is ascribed to *Faith*. It was their having an Eye to the Recompence of Reward, which is the Act of Faith, that enabled them to undergo such great Sufferings for *Righteousness sake*.

2. A *second* great *Christian* Virtue, which enters into the Description of Martyrdom, and all the lesser Sufferings for *Righteousness sake*, is Patience, which quickly breaks us of that Softness and Effeminacy which is so great an Enemy to

Virtue, and makes us expert and hardy Soldiers of *Jesus Christ* in this spiritual Warfare, a Thing absolutely necessary in a *Christian* Life. For the Miseries and Calamities of Life in general, more particularly those of a good *Christian* in a wicked World, are so many, that if we do not learn in Patience to possess our Souls, and by Faith to look at the World to come, we shall be of all Men the most miserable. Now Patience can never be so well learn'd as by actual Suffering; all the speculative and abstracted Precepts that can be given, will never teach it so well. As no Exercises of military Discipline in Time of Peace will make so good, at least so hardy a Soldier, as the actual enduring the Hardships of War; so Patience is not to be learn'd near so well in Time of Prosperity, as in Time of Persecution.

3. A *third* great Duty, most essential to this Virtue of Suffering for *Righteousness sake*, is the weaning of our Heart from the World, which is not more effectually attained by any thing than by Persecution. This is a Virtue for which the first and best *Christians* were very exemplary; and it had a noble Influence upon their Lives, not only in keeping them from all Dishonesty in their Dealings, but in opening their Hearts to an admirable Degree of Charity and brotherly Love, which it is hard to tell whether it was a greater Ornament or Benefit of their Profession, and one of the greatest Comforts in all their Troubles: For they who spared not their own Persons and Lives, far less valu'd their Estates, but freely contributed them for the common Service, and the Support of their *Christian* Brethren,

4. *Fourthly*, The World being thus overcome, this makes way for a greater Duty, and yet nearer, if possible, to the Heart of *Christianity*, namely, Self-denial; for there is no greater Ingredient in this Virtue of Suffering for *Righteousness sake*, than it is. And this is so fundamental a Virtue, that, without it, none can be *Christ's* Disciple, as he tells us himself, Mat. xvi. 24. *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*: And not only deny his own Humour, Pleasure, and Profit, but be ready to sacrifice his Life itself for *Christ*, as being the surest Way to obtain eternal Life, as it there follows. *For whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his Life for my sake, shall find it.*

5. A *fifth* noble Ingredient in this Duty of Suffering for *Righteousness sake*, is the Love of God and *Christ*. As there can be no greater Demonstration of Love and Friendship than our laying down our Life for our Friend, here is an Instance of a Love that is stronger than Death, when we can freely part with our Lives rather than betray our Duty. What a mighty Comfort must it be to them who suffer for *Christ*, that they know, by Experience, that nothing is able to separate them from his Love! See what a Torrent of spiritual Joy *St. Paul* breaks out into upon this Consideration, that his, and other good *Christians*, their Love of *Christ* was greater than that it could be overcome by all the Hardships of the World. Rom. viii. 35. *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword? (As it is written, for thy sake*

we are killed all the Day long; we are accounted as Sheep for the Slaughter;) nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors through him that loved us.

6. *Christian Courage and Fortitude* is inseparably annex'd to this Duty of patient *Suffering for Righteousness sake*. Our Lord's Apostles, when unacquainted with Sufferings, were very timorous, and apt to flee upon every remote Prospect of them; but when they came to be us'd and train'd to daily Trials, they grew bold and hardy, and suffer'd not only with Patience and Courage, but with Joy and Alacrity. It is said of them, that *they came away from the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Christ*, Acts v. 41. To use the Apostle's Phrase, *they grew strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might*, Eph. vi. 10. They grew expert at the Use of all spiritual Weapons, *the whole Armour of God*, by the Use of which they learn'd to withstand the Temptations of the Devil, the World, and the Flesh, *and having done all, to stand*. They came to be like a brave victorious Army, which enters upon the Battel with great Assurance of Success; and therefore never once thinks of flying or yielding.

7. *Lastly*, This Virtue of *Suffering for Righteousness sake*, is join'd with another Virtue, which crowns all the rest, I mean, Constancy and Perseverance to the End. For it is Patience, and Patience only, which will hold out to the End of our *Christian Course*; as the Apostle observes well of the Martyrs of the Old Testament, Heb. xii. 1. *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Martyrs, let us lay aside every*

Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us. As this Patience is the chief Virtue requisite towards Perseverance, so Weariness and Impatience (which is directly contrary to Suffering for Righteousness sake) is the most like to expose us to final Apostacy and Miscarrying; as the same Apostle observes at the third Verse of the forecited Chapter: For consider him, says he, that endured such Contradiction of Sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your Minds, Heb. xii. 3.

Thus now we see how *Suffering for Righteousness sake* entitles a Man to *the Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, to be a true Member of the Church militant here upon Earth; and that from the great *Christian* Virtues concurring in the Composition of it. For what better Characters would we have of a good *Christian* than Faith and Patience; a Mind disengaged from the World, Self-denial, the Love of God and *Christ*, *Christian* Courage and Fortitude, with Constancy and Perseverance? All which are inseparable from this Virtue of *Suffering for Righteousness sake*.

But then, *Secondly*, we shall be further convinc'd of this Truth, if we will consider likewise the blessed Fruits which usually flow from this Virtue, whereby it promotes the Kingdom of *Christ*, or the Power of the Gospel, both in ourselves and others. I shall instance likewise in some of the chief of them, which is the best Way I can think of to make us sensible of this great Truth: And *first*, what Effects it has upon ourselves; *then* what upon others.

1. *First*, then, As to ourselves ; it commonly proves and tries our Sincerity, shewing us both the Truth, and the Measure, and Degree of our other *Christian* Graces. *First*, The Truth of them, which indeed cannot easily be discerned without a Storm of Persecution. The wise Builder, and the Strength of his Building, how are they prov'd ? Our Lord tells us, *Mat. vii. 25. The Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House ; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock.* And, on the other hand, the foolish Builder, and the Slightness of his Foundation, how are they detected ? The very same Way. *The Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon the House, which had been built upon the Sand, and it fell, and great was the Fall of it.* So that we owe this to the Storm of Persecution ; it tries our Building in Religion, and discovers which has, and which has not a sound Foundation. This is a very great Help towards our Firmness and Sincerity in the *Christian* Profession ; for in the Day of Trial it will be found, that there are many Fair-Weather *Christians*, many who will stick by *Christ* in a Time of Peace and Prosperity, who, if they were to suffer for him, would presently abandon and forsake him. *Secondly*, This will try the Measure and Degree, as well as the Truth and Sincerity of our *Christian* Virtues ; for many weak *Christians* stagger, and are ready to fall off in Persecution, especially upon the first Surprizes of it, who yet, through the Grace of God, take Heart again, and chearfully undergo the Combat. Our Lord's Disciples, when he was apprehended, fled, and had not the Courage

to own him, tho' afterwards they recover'd themselves, or, rather, were recover'd by the Grace of God to a Firmness and Constancy in the Faith. It is by these Waverings and Fluctuations of Mind, these Fears and Staggerings in the Day of Persecution, that we may judge of our Weakness; for, as the wise Man observes, Prov. xxiv. 10. *If thou faint in the Day of Adversity, thy Strength is small.*

2. As *Persecution for Righteousness sake* helps to discover our Weakness, so it contributes very much towards the increasing our Humility. It is observable, that St. Peter, who, before his Temptation and Danger in the High-priest's Hall, and his Sin of denying his Master, was full of Self-confidence, asserting, that *tho' all the rest should deny him, he never would*; it is observable, I say, that, after this Trial and Fall, he had much more modest and humble Thoughts of himself; For when his Master asked him, *John xxi. 15. Lovest thou me more than these?* All his Answer was, that he loved him; and upon the same Question repeated a second and third Time, that *he knew that he loved him*; but not a Word of preferring himself to the rest, as before; he had now learn'd more Humility. And a very blessed Thing it is, when Persecution, and the Observation of our own Weakness and Lapses, brings us to this good Temper, as generally all good People it doth.

3. A *third* excellent Effect of a patient enduring *Persecution for Righteousness sake*, is, that it purges us from our Dross, that is, from our Corruptions, and brightens our Virtues, making them much more refined and purified than they were before.

before. Thus God, in his Judgments, is well compared, by the Prophet *Malachi*, to a Refiner and Purifier of Silver; *Mal. iii. 2, 3.* *But who may abide the Day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a Refiner's Fire, and like Fuller's Soap: And he shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of Silver; and he shall purify the Sons of Levi, and purge them as Gold and Silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an Offering in Righteousness.* A Time of Persecution for Righteousness sake, and the perfect Work of Patience under it, is commonly an excellent Season for all Graces, and a Time of refining and purifying us from all our Dross and Alloy, and of making us bright like Silver tried in a Furnace, purified seven Times, according to the Psalmist's Expression.

4. The Virtue of *Suffering for Righteousness sake*, is commonly attended with great Prayer and Devotion, both the Prayers of the Persecuted, and of their *Christian Brethren* in their Behalf. Thus it is observed of *Paul and Silas*, while Prisoners at *Philippi*, that *at Midnight they prayed and sang Praises unto God*, *Acts xvi. 25.* And *Acts xii. 5.* it is observ'd, that when *Peter* was imprison'd by *Herod*, *Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.* And the Church gains more by drawing near to God, than she loses by the Persecutions of Men. The Tribulation she meets with from the World, is more than compensated by the Peace she has in *Christ*. *In the World ye shall have Trouble, as our Saviour has foretold, but in him we shall have Peace*, *John xvi. 33.*

5. *Persecution for Righteousness sake* is commonly attended with great Love of the Persecuted one to another, and all the Exercises of the most endearing Friendship, which is full of Comfort and Happiness. *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*, Mal. iii. 16. Then there is a great Communication of Counsels, Hearts, Prayers, Purses, and Estates; then, if ever, is a full Exercise of *Christian* Friendship and brotherly Love, to the great Comfort of the Persecuted, and the Confusion of their Persecutors.

Upon others, likewise, it has most excellent Effects, in awakening the sleepy and secure World to a Consideration of those Things for which they see those that fear God stoutly endure the greatest Persecution. They who at other Times are of *Gallio's* Temper, and care for none of those Things, then begin naturally to have their Curiosity awaken'd; and the very Observation, how seriously some believe the great Matters of Religion, and how resolutely they venture their All upon it, and how patiently they suffer, is apt to make great Impressions; so that the Spectators themselves go away convinced, like the Centurion who waited on our Saviour at his Cross, when he saw all that was done, he was struck, and confessed, *truly this was the Son of God*. However it comes about, it is a constant Observation concerning this sort of *Persecution for Righteousness sake*, that the Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church.

From all which it is evident, what Relation the being *persecuted for Righteousness sake* has to the *Kingdom of Heaven*, if by that Kingdom we understand the Church militant here upon Earth;
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for no People have a better Title to be genuine Members of *Christ's* Kingdom than they: For this Virtue, we see, includes all other that are most essential to the *Christian* Religion, both in its Nature and Consequences.

II. They who are *persecuted for Righteousness sake* have likewise as good a Title to the Kingdom of Heaven in Glory. This necessarily follows from the other; for they who are good Members of the Church militant, are sure to be Members likewise of the Church triumphant. But we need not go to make out this their Title by Consequences; we shall hear from the following Part of this Text how it is directly promised them: *For great shall be their Reward in Heaven.* However, I shall forbear treating of it till we come to that Part of the Text, and content myself at present to draw a few Inferences from what has been said; which I shall do with all convenient Brevity, and have done.

I. *First*, then, From hence let us learn, after our Saviour's Example, not to measure Things only or chiefly by the Conveniencies or Inconveniencies they cause to the Body, or by what they afford of outward Profit or Pleasure in this World; but to take our Measures from the true Satisfaction Things yield to the Mind, and the Relation they have to our future eternal State. To have gone by the common Notions of the World, it would never have entered into our Hearts to have plac'd *Persecution for Righteousness sake* among the Beatitudes. But our blessed Lord consider'd more what was for our real and eternal Good, than what was only for our temporary

temporary Satisfaction, and so should we. However unpleasant it may be to Flesh and Blood, there is certainly nothing better for our Souls, nothing that contributes more to our inward Tranquility of Mind, or future eternal Felicity, than the Cross of *Christ*.

2. Is it so blessed a Thing patiently to bear *Persecution for Righteousness sake*? Then let this Doctrine fortify us with Courage, the Courage of Confessors and Martyrs, whenever we shall be call'd out to Suffering for a good Cause, and the Testimony of a good Conscience; and, in the mean Time, let it teach us, at least in Preparation of Mind, to embrace the Cross, and to resolve rather to suffer than to sin. The Church has been often under bloody Trials from the Persecutions of Heathen Emperors, and *Romish* Croisades and Inquisitions; many Popes by themselves, and the Princes of their Communion, have drank deep in the Blood of the Saints; and such is the Uncertainty of all human Affairs, that though at the present, Thanks be to God for it, there is a good Prospect of external Peace to the Church, yet we know not how soon the Clouds may gather; therefore it is always necessary to take up our Cross, and to resolve, however the World may go, that we will adhere to *Christ*, and, whenever we are called out to it, that we will chearfully suffer, rather than betray our Duty to him our great Master. This will help to put and keep our Minds in a serious Temper, and enable us to bring forth those blessed Fruits which I have shew'd to be
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the genuine Consequences of *Suffering for Righteousness sake*.

3. *Lastly*, This Doctrine may serve to discover to us the true Spirit of *Christianity*, with relation to Persecution, and that in these two Points: Persecution is no Weapon it ever makes use of for propagating any of its Doctrines, and when we are persecuted, the *Christian* Spirit will teach us not to return Evil for Evil, not to use the Way of Revenge, but that of Meekness and Patience; two Points, which, if they had been thoroughly understood and consider'd, would have prevented abundance of Mischief, which has been introduced by the bloody Spirit of Persecution on the one hand, and the revengeful and rebellious Resentment of Injuries on the other. But whatever is to be said of publick Counsels, and their Pleas of Law, Privileges, Preservation of Liberty, Property, and Religion; let us learn, at least in the *Quality* of private *Christians*, to guard our Spirits against all Malice and Revenge: Let no Provocations be able to conquer the Charity, Meekness, and Patience of our Minds: Let us not be overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good. Perhaps there are some such implacable Tempers as will not be reclaim'd by the Ways of Love and Kindness, but we had better leave such to God; and though all other Endeavours should fail, never cease to pray for them, assuring ourselves that if we commit our Cause to him, to whom both Mercy and Vengeance belong, we shall in due Time come off with Honour. This is the Psalmist's Advice, *Psal.* xxxvii. 5, 6. and I shall conclude with it: *Commit thy Way unto the Lord:*

304 *Persecution for Righteousness, &c.* [SERM.
*Lord: Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to
pass. And he shall bring forth thy Righteousness as
the Light, and thy Judgment as the Noon-day.*
Now to this great and good God, Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVII.

M A T. V. 10.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Ver. 11. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

Ver. 12. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

IN these three Verses, which give us an Account of the last Beatitude, I took Notice of three Heads of *Discourse*:

1. In the 10th Verse we have a Blessing pronounced in general to all that are *persecuted for Righteousness sake*, with a particular Encouragement annexed, that *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*.

2. At the 11th Verse we have a tacit Prediction that this State of Persecution should be the Lot of *Christ's Disciples and Followers*; *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake*.

3. At the 12th Verse we have our Saviour's Directions to his Disciples, as to their chearful Deportment under these persecuted Circumstances, and his Comforts to them, with extraordinary Promises in such a Case: *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

As to the *first* of these, the Blessing pronounced in general to all that are *persecuted for Righteousness sake*, with the Encouragement annexed, that *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; I have already consider'd it in two Discourses on the 10th Verse. I proceed now to the *second*, contain'd in the 11th Verse, in which our Lord applies the foregoing general Doctrine of Persecution to his Disciples and Followers, foretelling them, (for all their sanguine Expectations) that this should be their Lot in his Service. And that they might not be offended at it, he joins his Blessing to it, and, in the Words immediately following, comforts and directs them under it.

In the Words we may observe these two Things:

I. A Prediction that it should be the Lot of our Saviour's Disciples, that is, of *Christians*, to be persecuted on account of their Religion. *Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

II. *Christ's* Blessing upon them in such a Case. *Blessed are ye, when this shall be your Lot, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

I. I begin, *first*, with our Saviour's Prediction, that it should be the Lot of *Christians* to be persecuted for his sake, that is, on account of their Religion. And this being a Doctrine no less strange in itself, that so innocent and useful a Religion should meet with so bad Treatment in the World, than it was surprizing and unexpected to the Disciples in those Days; it will require some Pains to set it in a due Light. In speaking to it, I shall observe the following Method:

1. I will consider how agreeable this Doctrine is to other Passages of holy Scripture.

2. I will enquire into the Grounds of it, from Reason and Experience.

3. I will consider how this Prediction was accomplished to the primitive *Christians*.

4. I will enquire whether, and how far we are concern'd in this Doctrine, who live in the more peaceable Times of *Christianity*.

5. I intend to draw some proper Inferences and Conclusions from it, in order to Practice.

1. *First*, I am to consider how agreeable this Doctrine is to other Passages of holy Scripture. There was nothing the *Jews* were more mistaken in, than in this, that they thought the *Messiah* and his Followers should flourish in all manner of external Ease, Wealth, Pomp, and Grandeur, without any Mixture of Trouble; and there was no Notion our Saviour was at more Pains to rectify, taking all Occasions and Opportunities to foretel the Cross, and to fortify and prepare his Disciples for it. Instead of a rich and plentiful Settlement in his Service, he told one, that offer'd to follow him, that *the Foxes had Holes, and the*

Birds of the Air had Nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head, Mat. viii. 20. Instead of the Love of Friends and Kindred, and the rest of the World, he told his Disciples, that the Brother should deliver up the Brother to Death, and the Father the Child, and that they should be hated of all Men for his Names sake, Mat. x. 21. Instead of having a good Opinion of them for their holy Lives, or great Miracles, or excellent Doctrine, he foretold how they should be traduced and calumniated, and all the vile Aspersions thrown upon them, because of their relation to him. The Disciple is not above his Master, says he, nor the Servant above his Lord. It is enough for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord: If they have called the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his Household? Mat. x. 24. Instead of quiet peaceable Lives in this World, he foretold that they should have Lives full of Trouble, and be worried and devoured by the rest of Mankind. Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth: I came not to send Peace, but a Sword, Mat. x. 34. And elsewhere, Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves. Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves. But beware of Men, for they will deliver you up to the Councils, and they will scourge you in their Synagogues. And ye shall be brought before Governors and Kings for my sake, for a Testimony against them and the Gentiles, Mat. x. 16. It is needless to multiply more Passages to this Purpose, for every where throughout the Gospels our Saviour's Predictions are in the same Strain; instead of inveigling and enticing his Disciples with fair Promises of great Things in this

this World, he all along tells them freely the worst they were to expect; and particularly, that *if they would come after him, they must deny themselves, and take up their Cross, and follow him*, Mat. xvi. 24. And therefore it will be fit,

2. That we proceed, in the *second* Place, to a more difficult Enquiry into the Reasons and Grounds of this strange Doctrine of the Cross, and of our Saviour's so early Prediction of it; in order to which, let us distinctly consider these two Things:

1. The Grounds of this, in Appearance very strange Doctrine and Dispensation, that the best Men, and the best Institution, should *be persecuted and evil spoken of*.

2. Why our Saviour thought it proper so early to foretel this, which was so apt in its own Nature to offend his Disciples, and to cause them to fall off from him; and did not chuse rather to conceal it, till they were well confirmed in his Service.

1. To begin with the *first*. The Grounds of this seemingly strange Dispensation, that the best Men and the best Institution should be persecuted, and not rather welcomed and encouraged in the World. Now this, I think, may be accounted for in two several Respects; *First*, As it is the natural Result of the several Tempers of both good and bad Men in this World. *Secondly*, As it is the wise Appointment of the superior Providence of Almighty God, for divers wise Ends and Purposes. I shall consider it in both these Respects.

First, As it is the natural Result of the several Tempers of both good and bad Men in this

World; and, in this Respect, it is no very hard Matter to account for it: For a Wolf has not a more natural Antipathy to a Lamb, than wicked Men have to the good. They inwardly hate and abhor them, though, for their own Ends, they often counterfeit Kindness, and think not fit to declare their Hatred, except when they may do it to Advantage. And it must be confess'd, that Advantages they have, a great many; for bad Men do mightily out-number the good, and consequently in all Societies are able to over-top them in Power and Strength: Particularly, if Matters come to be transacted either by the way of Force and Tumult, or if Votes come to be number'd, instead of Reasons weigh'd, good Men are in Election to come badly off; especially if Numbers and Authority go together, then the little Flock of good Men has much the worst of it. An Instance of this we have in the Case of *Lot in Sodom*; where, when the Angels came to his House, the prevailing Power and Numbers of wicked Men shew'd what mad Work they would have made, if the Angels had not restrained them; and, particularly, how they grew upon the Weakness of *Lot* and his Party. The History is upon Record, *Gen. xix.* where we may see what Rudeness the Men of *Sodom* offer'd to *Lot*, upon his entertaining at his House the two Angels, whom they took to be two sojourning Men, intending to force them to the same abominable Lewdness which was so shamefully practis'd among themselves. *First*, They beset his House, and over-bore him with Numbers; *Before they lay down*, says the Text, *the Men of the City, even the Men of Sodom, compassed the House round,*

round, both old and young, all the People from every Quarter. Then they went to break open his Doors; *Stand back, say they, this one Fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a Judge.* This one Fellow; see how they despise him, as having no Party, or Interest. And this is the common Lot of good Men; they are no Body, when overpower'd with the Numbers and Interest of the Wicked. Then the Contrariety of their Tempers, and Way of Life, is as great an Occasion of Trouble to good Men: For the Example of good Men, where it is not imitated, is commonly hated and decry'd, as St. Peter observes; *For the Time past of our Life may suffice us, says he, to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, when we walked in Lasciviousness, Lusts, Excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquetings, and abominable Idolatries; wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot, speaking evil of you,* 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. Now if bare good Example, which is the silentest and most inoffensive way of reforming Mankind, is so ill taken; what would it be if the good Man should proceed further to Reproofs and Admonitions; to the standing up for good Laws against Vice, when he happens to be a Member of the legislative Body; or to put good Laws strictly in execution, if he should come to be cloathed with the Power and Authority of a Magistrate? What if he went about to draw in others, and to make a Party and Interest for doing all the Good he can in the Country where he lives? It is too plain that he would quickly raise a great many Nests of Wasps about him, that would not only with their Noise put to Silence and drown his good

Admonitions, but endeavour likewise to make him quit his Station, with the Sharpness and Unmercifulness of their Stings; I mean, their rude and provoking Actions and Behaviour. It is true, in Countries bless'd with good Laws, and good Governors and Magistrates, wicked Men dare not do as they would, and are civil more out of Fear than Choice; but still the inward Temper and Inclination of their Minds is persecuting and bloody against all that are uneasy to them, either by their Authority, Admonition, or Example: And if this Perverseness of Temper should meet in any near relation of Life, such as Magistrate and Subject, Parent or Child, Master or Servant, Husband or Wife, near Neighbour or Kinsman; it is then a great deal more troublesome and intolerable.

And as the Temper and Inclination of wicked Men prompts them to the Persecution of others, there is often likewise a great Mixture of worldly Interest which drives it on. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, in our Saviour's Days, drove on his Death, chiefly from this Consideration, that the World was like to forsake them, and follow him. *What do we, say they, for this Man doth many Miracles; if we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our Place and Nation,* John xi. 47. It is plain, then, they judg'd that their Interest led them, as well as their Temper and Inclination, to the Persecution of *Jesus*; and it has been often so since: The Promoters of Persecution have an Eye to the Estates or Places of others, and contrive penal or sanguinary Laws, on purpose to catch Men of Principles and Conscience, that
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they may have the Benefit of the Fines or Forfeitures of their Estates or Places to themselves, or their Friends; at least, that by removing them out of the Way, there may be the more Business for *them*, consequently the more Advantage and Profit coming to *them*.

But, *Secondly*, I am to account likewise for the Persecution of good *Christians*, as it is the Appointment of the Providence of God, for divers wise Ends and Purposes. Of which,

(1.) The *first* and principal is, that it is so very beneficial to good Men, far beyond worldly Wealth, Ease, and Prosperity. The Good of the Soul, and the promoting our eternal Welfare and Happiness, are Ends much more worthy of God, than the gratifying our temporal Interest, or carnal Inclinations; this being the Thing which ought to be principally minded, wherever our temporal and eternal Interest interfere, it is but reasonable that the eternal one should be preferred. Now it is certain that there is nothing more dangerous for Man, in this corrupt State, than an uninterrupted Course of Prosperity; and, on the other hand, nothing more sovereignly medicinal, than the Cross: So that it is no Wonder if God rebukes and chastens those whom he loves. Affliction is so well fitted to make Men serious and considerate, to make them sensible of the Vanity of the World, and to wean their Hearts from it; to work in them a Sense and Fear of God, and an Apprehension of his righteous Judgments; to awaken the Conscience to Self-examination, and Watchfulness against Sin; to teach us Humility, Patience, Self-denial, and Resignation to the Will of God; which can never be so readily

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dily or so perfectly learned in an uninterrupted Ease and Prosperity; it is likewise so good a Trier of the Sincerity of our Faith, and all our other Virtues; it is such a Spur to Repentance and Prayer; it is so naturally fruitful in good Thoughts and holy Resolutions, and is so instrumental in the mortifying all our Lusts and Corruptions, and particularly in subduing our Pride and Passion, that the Pain and Bitterness of it is much more than recompenced with the real good Fruits it produces: It is certain that Nurture and Discipline is not more necessary towards the good Education and Government of a Child, than Affliction is towards the making a good *Christian*; and therefore it is no Wonder that it is deliver'd as a certain Truth, that *through much Tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God*. So many Benefits attending the Cross, it is no Wonder that God's Providence concurs in permitting it to fall to the Lot of good Men.

(2.) Let it be consider'd, that if good *Christians* had an uninterrupted Course of worldly Prosperity, neither themselves nor others could have the Comfort to know whether they follow *Christ* for himself, or for the Loaves; whether they chuse the Ways of Religion and Virtue for their own sakes, or for the worldly Felicity attending them; or whether they act from a Principle of Faith or Sense: For it might then be readily objected to them what the Devil objected against *Job*, *Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every Side? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands, and his Substance is increased in the Land. But put forth thine Hand*

Hand now, and touch all that he bath, and he will curse thee to thy Face, Job i. 9. It is therefore very convenient, both for answering such Objections of those that have no Kindness for Religion, and for satisfying good *Christians* themselves, as to their inward Sincerity, and to keep out Hypocrites from the Church, or to detect them after they have crept into it; that there be some certain way to distinguish the one from the other, and that is chiefly by the Cross of *Christ*, as the Apostle remarks, Heb. xii. 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with Sons.*

So much for the first Part of this Enquiry, the Grounds and Reasons of this seemingly strange Doctrine and Dispensation, that the best Men, and the best Institution, should *be persecuted, and evil spoken of.*

2. The *second* Part of our Enquiry must be, Why our Saviour thought it proper so early to foretel this, being very apt in its own Nature to offend his weak Disciples, and to cause them to fall off from him, and did not chuse rather to conceal it, till they were well confirmed in his Service. We have already consider'd how necessary the Doctrine of the Cross is in itself, so that all that is to be clear'd on this Head is, that it was better for our Saviour to use Freedom with his Disciples, and to let them know from the Beginning what they were to expect, than to leave them unforewarned, to be surprized with unexpected Sufferings. For clearing of this, it is to be consider'd, that this Conduct of our Saviour's answer'd the following five or six wise Ends and Purposes,

1.. It is a clear Proof of our Saviour's prophetic Spirit, and, as his other Miracles, serves for a Demonstration of his divine Authority and Commission, and so was an excellent Means of begetting Faith in his Disciples, when they came to compare Prophecies with their Events. And it is plain this was one Thing our Saviour intended by these Predictions of his own and his Disciples Sufferings. *I have told you, before it come to pass, says he, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe, John xiv. 29. And again, These Things have I told you, that when the Time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them, John xvi. 4.*

2. This Prediction was of excellent Use to discourage Hypocrites from the Profession of *Christianity*, to let them know before-hand what a vast deal of Trouble, and how little Encouragement his Disciples were to expect from the World. Our Saviour and his Apostles foresaw the Danger of this worldly Spirit in the Church, and took abundance of Pains to keep it out; they were not more careful to invite in true Profelytes, than to keep out false Pretenders. In this very Chapter we may observe, that so soon as the good News of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, preached by our Saviour, and the many great Miracles he wrought, had procured him a vast Number of Disciples and Followers, he immediately set about the undeceiving them, as to the Expectations they had of Wealth, Honour, carnal Pleasure, Conquest, and Revenge in his Service; instead of which, he lets them know here, that they were to expect Calumnies, Revilings, and Persecutions: And whenever he perceived any one addressing him with those worldly Expectations, he still obviated and
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prevented them, by telling them what they must look for from the World. This was the usual Test he put Men to, before he admitted them to his Service. If they were willing to quit all their worldly Pretensions, and to take up their Cross, then they were well qualified to be his Disciples; otherwise, not fit for his Service, if they had ever so many other good Qualifications. Thus to the rich young Man, who had so many other good Morals, he said, *One Thing thou lackest; go thy Way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor; and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven; and come and take up the Cross, and follow me*, Mark x. 21. He could not stand this Test; he was sad at this Saying, and went away grieved, for he had great Possessions; and it seems his Heart was set upon them.

3. The foretelling the Cross was of good Use to give our Saviour's Disciples a right Notion of his Kingdom, and to wean their Hearts from the World; after which, it is plain, they had very great Hankerings: Now what could be more proper to beat down this worldly Spirit, than to mortify them with a frequent inculcating the Doctrine of the Cross, and to instruct them in the true Nature and Meaning of the Gospel-Promises, as relating either to the future State of Glory in Heaven, or to an inward Peace and Tranquility of Mind, or to the outward Comforts resulting from brotherly Love; but that still they were to expect Trouble from the World, and that Persecutions were to be a necessary Ingredient in all their Comforts?

4. Our Saviour's foretelling the Cross, was a good way to arm his Disciples with Courage and
Reso-

Resolution to bear it, that having it in Expectation and View, they might not be surprized, but duly prepared and fortified for it. *Beloved*, says St. Peter, *think it not strange concerning the fiery Trial, which is to try you, as though some strange Thing happen'd unto you*, 1 Pet. iv. 12. It was this general Expectation of Sufferings which so fortified St. Paul, that he was always ready to encounter them. *Behold*, says he, *I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the Things which shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me. But none of these Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God*, Acts xx. 22.

5. The foretelling the Cross was agreeable to that Sincerity so much recommended by our Saviour's Doctrine and Example; it was to deal fairly and candidly with his Disciples, and to tell them truly what they were to expect: Whereas to have concealed it from them would have been to have deceived them, as Kidnappers do by those they inveigle and trepan away into strange Countries, telling them abundance of plausible fine Stories, magnifying all the good Things, and concealing or extenuating all the Hardships they are to meet with. Our Lord uses a quite contrary Method to this, telling from the Beginning the worst Men are to expect in his Service; and then comforting them under it with his heavenly Promises and Example.

6. *Lastly*, The foretelling the Sufferings of our Saviour and his Apostles, serves to demonstrate to the

the World, that those Sufferings are voluntary, and of their own Choice, which is a very considerable Ingredient in them: Had our Saviour's Sufferings been involuntary, this would have made them to be no Act of his, and consequently would have destroy'd all the Virtue and Merit of them; and if his Disciples Sufferings had been involuntary, they might easily have declined them, by abandoning that Profession which occasioned them; but then all the Virtue of them had been gone, and the Sufferers had not been entitled to the glorious Promises annexed to them in my Text, and in many other Passages of the *New Testament*. But now, that they knew the worst that attended the *Christian* Profession, and yet would chuse it, this shews a prevalent Love to the Truth, and a Preference of what they hop'd from *Christ* in another Life, to all that they could lose in this.

Thus now we have consider'd both the Reasonableness of this Dispensation of the Cross, and why it was necessary that it should be so early foretold to our Saviour's Disciples; and if this would scare away any of them from his Service, it was much better that they should never engage with him, than, after they had been his Disciples, to dishonour him, and his Religion, by their Cowardice and Apostacy in the Day of Trial.

S E R M O N XVIII.

MAT. V. II.

Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

THE *Third* Thing I proposed to consider in this Prediction of Sufferings to our Saviour's Disciples, was, how it was fulfilled in the primitive Times of *Christianity*; for this is one good Way to find out the Meaning of Prophecies or Predictions, even to compare them with the Events: And tho' the Truths our Saviour here foretold have relation to true *Christians* in all Times, who are generally very ill used by the World; no doubt they had a more particular Regard to the Apostles and those first *Christians* to whom they were spoken: *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you.* Now that this Matter of Fact was literally so, is plain, from all that remains to us of Church History: The first Attempt to destroy the Church was by Persecution, but, God be praised, this Way was so far from prevailing, that the Church was never more glorious in all manner of *Christian* Graces and Virtues, than she was in those Days,

Days, like Gold well purified in the Fire from all its Dross and Alloy. And as the Sufferings of the Apostles and first *Christians* were thus notorious, it was as notorious that those their Sufferings were purely on account of their Religion; they were not so much as accused then of Sedition, Treason, or Rebellion, with relation to the State; or of Theft, Robbery, Murder, or any other capital Crime, with relation to private Men: All the Crime laid to their Charge, was an obstinate Resoluteness to own their Religion, and to adhere to it. Some of their Enemies imputed this their Boldness to Melancholy, as if they had been weary of their Lives; others to Vanity, as if they had been proud of the Honour of Martyrdom: But there was no Reason for either of these Imputations; for, as to Melancholy, they shew'd in all other Respects such an even Temper of Mind, and went to Death with so much Chearfulness and Joy, as is directed here in the Words immediately following my Text, that of all Things it was the most unlike to that dismal Passion. And as to Vanity, the known Humility and Modesty of the other Parts of their Lives did clearly evince the Falshood of that Aspersions: Besides, what great Honour could they expect from these their Martyrdoms, when many common Persons, of no Name, or Note, went boldly and patiently to Death for their Religion, who could not so much as hope that their Names would be preserved, but that, in so great Crowds of Sufferers, they must be buried in Oblivion? It was a true Character the Apostle St. *Paul* gave of those Times, and of the *Christian* Sufferers in those Days, that *If in this Life only they had had*

Hope in Christ, of all Men they should have been the most miserable, 1 Cor. xiv. 19. So plain it was, both that they were expos'd to great Sufferings, and that those Sufferings were on account of their better Hopes in a future State. But then

It is a real Question, Whether this Prediction of our Saviour's is to be extended farther than to those early Times, when the secular Powers were Enemies to *Christianity*; and whether, and how far we are concerned in this Doctrine, who live in the more peaceable Times of the Church, when she has the Happiness of a legal Establishment, and Kings are become her nursing Fathers, and Queens her nursing Mothers: Which is the *fourth* Thing I propos'd to consider from this Prediction. And for Resolution of it, I shall enquire into these *three* Things, upon which the Resolution of this Question will depend. 1. What Light the holy Scriptures offer in this Matter. 2. How far it is true that the publick Enmity against *Christians* is ceased, from the Empire's turning *Christian*. 3. How far the secular Spirit in the Church is apt to expose it still to Persecution. From the Consideration of all which, it will, I doubt, appear, that good *Christians* are not yet exempted from being concerned in this Prediction, that they should be reviled, calumniated, and persecuted for *Christ's* sake.

1. To begin with the holy Scriptures. There are a great many Things in them relating to this Matter, which seem to have a general Aspect upon all Times, and not to be restrained only to the Times of publick Persecution. I shall instance in some of the chief of them. St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* deliver it as a general true Doctrine,

that *We must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. And altho' these Words seem to point at Afflictions in general, if we look into the Context, and consider the Occasion upon which they were spoke, which was a late Persecution they had endured in *Lycania*, we may conclude that they chiefly respect the Persecutions we are to endure for the Faith. There is another Passage yet more express to the same Purpose; it is 2 *Tim.* iii. 12. where *St. Paul*, speaking of the Persecutions he had endured at *Antioch*, *Iconium*, and *Lystra*, out of all which the Lord had delivered him, adds, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution.* And the same Apostle, *Gal.* iv. 29. seems to make it a general Remark for all Times, that carnal worldly Men should persecute the pious and virtuous. *But as then*, says he, *he that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.* As then, speaking of the Days of *Isaac* and *Ishmael*, and he might have run it up much higher, to the Days of *Cain* and *Abel*; so ancient and so natural is the Observation: And especially it holds true in all Ages, of those who have been the most zealous Reformers of Mankind, the Prophets and Apostles, *John the Baptist*, and *Christ* himself; as *St. Stephen* roundly upbraids the *Jews*, Acts vii. 51. *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your Fathers did, so do ye. Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the just one, of whom ye have been now the Betrayers and Murderers.* So that the holy Scripture seems to

make the Observation general, and to put it upon a lasting Foot, that as long as there are wicked and good Men in the World, the wicked will persecute the good, especially those who endeavour to reclaim and reform them.

2. Let us consider how far it is true that the publick Enmity against *Christians* is ceased, by the coming over of so many States and Kingdoms to the Profession of the *Christian* Faith. Upon this Subject it will be granted, that there are very considerable Parts of the World as yet sitting in Darkness, and in the Region of the Shadow of Death; and that the Propagation of the Gospel in all such Countries is apt to be attended with the old Dangers. But besides the many Nations of Infidels, it is to be considered, that there are a great many Parties, Sects, and Heresies, among those called *Christians*, and that they commonly persecute one another with as keen, or a more keen Hatred, than *Heathens* do *Christians*; as was foretold by St. Paul, in his Speech to the *Ephesian* Bishops. *I know, says he, that, after my Departure, grievous Wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the Flock; also of your own selves shall Men arise, speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them, Acts xx. 29.* And in that forecited Place, 2 *Tim. iii. 13.* after he had said that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer Persecution*; he adds, *But evil Men and Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.* Particularly, the Persecutions of Antichrist are foretold at large in the Book of the *Revelation* of St. John; and, indeed, the Church of Rome, that one Branch of the heretical Church, has shed more *Christian* Blood, by way of Persecution,

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than

than ever was shed by all the *Heathen* Emperors. So that it is not the Empire's turning *Christian*, that has put an entire Stop to Persecution, or to the fulfilling of our Saviour's Prediction in my Text. But,

3. It is to be further consider'd, that there is a worldly and carnal Spirit among mere nominal *Christians*, which is as apt to persecute the truly pious and godly *Christians*, as ever; for there was at the Time when the Empire turned *Christian*, and ever since there has been, even in all *Christian* Kingdoms and Commonwealths, a great Number which crowd into the Church, of such as are mere nominal *Christians*, but really *Heathens*, or Men of no Religion, who are as apt as ever the *Heathens* were to persecute the sincere *Christians*: It is true, their Persecutions are not to Blood, (for *that* the Laws and Constitutions of those *Christian* Countries will not allow of) but they go to all the other Ways and Means their Malice and Wickedness can invent. Sometimes they blast their Reputation by Lies and Calumnies; sometimes they prepare Traps of doubtful or unlawful Oaths, to ensnare their Consciences; sometimes they require their Assent to dangerous or false Opinions; and sometimes their Compliance with superstitious or sinful Practices: It is certain, they have a great Advantage of them in all such Matters, being either of no Principles themselves, or such loose ones, that they can easily shift Sides, and make their Principles bend to their Interest; so that there is scarce any Way left, whereby they can be involved in Persecution, while they have all the Advantages of involving others at their Pleasure. It is a very unequal

Match then betwixt a good and a bad Man, in point of Persecution, the good Man being tied up by the strict Rules of Religion, Honour, Virtue, and good Conscience ; and the bad Man left at large, to do as much Hurt to his Neighbour as makes for his worldly Interest.

V. I am now, in the last Place, to draw a few practical Inferences from this Prediction of our Saviour's, concerning the Persecution of good *Christians*.

Inf. 1. The first shall be to fortify and prepare us for it, and, in order to that, I shall offer a few Preparatives, both by way of Consideration and Practice.

First, By way of Consideration.

1. Let us consider, that whatever Persecutions befall good *Christians*, are not only foreseen and fore-ordained by God, but chosen and allotted by him for their Good. If we consider Persecution as it is designed by the inferior Instruments of it, it will be apt to provoke our Resentment ; but if we consider it as it is designed by Almighty God, with all the blessed Fruits and Consequences of it, both upon ourselves and others, it will dispose us to Meekness and Patience, and we shall be fully convinced that it tends mightily to the Glory of God, and to the Good of the Church in general, and of every individual *Christian* that shall be exercised thereby. Whosoever will be at the Pains to compare the Church in its prosperous State in this World, with the same Church in Times of Persecution, he will find that it has got more by exemplary Faith and Patience, than ever it did by the greatest worldly Prosperity ; the one
being

being apt to reduce the Church to true and real Professors, the other to fill it with Hypocrites.

2. Let us consider, that Persecutions, tho' very unpleasant and untoothsome, yet are, in their own Nature, and as designed by God, sovereignly medicinal, for purging us of all Corruption, and for purifying and refining us, as Silver and Gold are purified in the Refiner's Fire. The Apostles often take Notice of this: St. *Peter* observes of this State, that *Tho' for a Season they are in Heaviness through manifold Temptations, yet the Trial of their Faith being much more precious than of Gold that perisheth, though it be tried with Fire, will be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 6. And St. *James*, in the Beginning of his Epistle, exhorts the *Christians*, to whom he writes, *To count it all Joy when they fall into divers Temptations; knowing that the trying of their Faith worketh Patience. But let Patience, says he, have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*, Jam. i. 2. And St. *Paul* says, *We glory in Tribulations also, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience; and Patience, Experience; and Experience, Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed*, Rom. v. 3. So many noble Consequences of Sufferings for a good Cause, patiently endur'd, did these great Apostles observe.

3. We are to consider, that Persecution, being the Portion which *Christ* has allotted to his best Servants, is not to be look'd upon as any Sign of God's Anger or Displeasure, but rather of the tender Care he takes of us, that we be not intoxicated and bewitch'd with the Pleasures and Enjoyments of the World; but that our Hearts may

be weaned from it, and set on Heaven. Prosperity, among many other Inconveniencies, inclines us to set up our Rest here; whereas Persecution and Adversity not only makes Death welcome, but increases our longing Desires after Heaven, and makes us wish to be dissolved, and to be with *Christ*, in that safe Retreat where the Malice and Persecution of Men can't reach: For, as our Saviour tells us, *When they have killed the Body, they have no more that they can do*, Luke xii. 4.

4. Let us consider, that the way of the Cross is that which *Christ* has not only honour'd here, by assuming it into the Number of the Beatitudes; but has particularly promised an high Degree of Glory to it in Heaven, as we shall hear hereafter, when we come to consider these Words, *For great is your Reward in Heaven*: And that it is the Way which he hath honour'd and sweeten'd by his own Example, and that of the Prophets and Apostles, and most eminent Saints in all Ages of the Church.

I come next to the Preparatives for Persecution, by way of Practice.

1. If the Times are ever so quiet and peaceable, let no Persecution surprize us, as if any strange unexpected Thing happen'd unto us. It is commonly the Suddenness and Unexpectedness of Troubles that ruffles and discomposes our Minds more than the Weight and Burthen, more than the Fierceness and Sharpness of them. If we will either consult the Histories of Times past before we were born, or what we have seen in our own Days, how naturally Troubles spring up to good Men; we have no Reason to be sanguine in our Hopes of Peace and Quietness in our Days,
but

but should suit our Deportment to our Expectation of troublesome Times.

2. Another good Exercise of our Thoughts, with relation to Troubles and Persecutions, is, to endeavour to look beyond the immediate Authors and Instruments, and to accept them as out of the Hands of God; whilst upon those Occasions we pore upon the Baseness, Falshood, Villany, and Cruelty of Men, we find still fresh Matter to feed our Anger and Resentment; but when we look up unto God, and consider those Troubles as his fatherly Chastisements, and Men only as his Instruments, we have all Reason then to be quiet and contented, and to bear the Cross patiently, considering it is what our Saviour foretold to the *Christian* Church in general, and what is designed for our own Good in particular. And if they drive us to God, and to the Exercise of fervent Prayer and Supplication, we may confidently expect to be comforted and supported under them, and in due Time to be delivered out of them.

3. The best Way to encounter Persecution, is to keep a good Conscience. An inward Conscientiousness of Innocence pulls the Sting out of all Troubles, and not only so, but gives a firm Hope and Courage, and Confidence in God, which adds an incredible Strength to the Mind, that it is not easily broken or shaken with Troubles. But when the inward Lashes of Conscience are added to the outward Smart of Afflictions, then it is they drive to an utter Despondency of Mind, and make the Sufferer not only impatient, but heartless and diffident,

4. Let us, during the whole Course of our Lives, accustom ourselves to Sobriety, and Temperance, Patience, and the Exercise of Adversity in the midst of Prosperity, that in the Day of Persecution we may not faint through Softness and Effeminacy, but may chearfully go through the afflicting Part of Suffering, as a Thing for which we were well fortified and prepared. We see, from daily Experience, that they who have been from their Infancy accustom'd to an hard Bed, and coarse Fare, can much more easily bear with all manner of Hardship, when it comes, than they who have been delicately and softly bred from the Cradle, and never knew what it was to be denied in any of their Humours.

5. *Lastly*, If we would prepare ourselves for Suffering, let us frequently in our Minds contemplate Heaven and Happiness, and consider it as approaching apace to good Men, and that it is not now far off; and that these very Troubles, some of them immediately convey us thither, and all of them further us in our Journey; at the End of which, we shall have a glorious Issue of them, when we shall find that *This light Affliction, which endures for a Moment, shall have wrought for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

Inf. 2. The second Inference from this our Saviour's Prediction of the Cross to good *Christians*, shall be to comfort all that are persecuted for a good Cause, and the Testimony of a good Conscience. They are not abandoned and expos'd, as the World thinks, to the Fury of their Adversaries; there is a watchful Providence that order'd all these Things, which foretold them, and contrived

contrived them on purpose for our Good, and which blesses and sanctifies them for carrying on the great Ends of the Propagation of the Gospel in general, and the Growth of Grace, and Preparation for the Crown of Martyrdom in particular. But, for the further Comfort of Sufferers on those religious Accounts, let us next consider,

The *second* Thing I observed in the Words, namely, the Blessing here pronounced to all such; *Blessed are ye, when ye shall be so used, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.* Only before we come to it, it will be necessary briefly to take Notice of two Properties of the Virtue itself; namely, *first*, that the Sufferings to which the Blessing is annexed must be undeserved, the Revilings and evil Speakings must be false, and the Persecutions must be for *Christ's* sake; that is, either for adhering to the Profession of the *Christian* Faith, or for doing of *Christian* Duty. *Secondly*, It is supposed here that we are totally passive, as well as innocent, in these Sufferings: For if we go about to avenge ourselves, and to return Reviling for Reviling, evil Speaking for evil Speaking, Persecution for Persecution; if we go about to exact Satisfaction at our own Hands, then we are no longer the patient, innocent Sufferers, here described, to whom the Blessing is annexed.

And now, to come to the Blessing itself, it may be consider'd either as a present or a future Blessing: For they are *now* blessed; *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you*; and likewise,

likewise, *great is your Reward in Heaven.* At present it is certainly a blessed Temper of Mind, which disposes us humbly and patiently, I add, courageously, to bear all manner of Hardships for our Duty. They have great inward Peace and Tranquility in their own Minds, and have a great Command of their Passions, whoever they are that can thus *in Patience possess their Souls*, Luke xxi. 19. And it is a further Blessing attending them at present, that the divine Providence concerns itself to right them who commit their Cause to God. He will clear their injured Reputations, as the Psalmist has it, *Psal. xxxvii. 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy Righteousness as the Light, and thy Judgment as the Noon-day.* Further, he will raise us up Friends to provide for us, and to comfort us in Troubles, better Friends, and more sure Supplies, than we lost for his sake, according to that most gracious, but little understood, or believed, or considered Promise of the *Hundred-fold at present*, besides everlasting Life to come, *Mat. xix. 29.* He will remove, or abate, or disappoint the Fury of our Enemies, and in due Time deliver us out of all our Troubles; or, if he think not fit to send us this temporal Deliverance, he will do for us what is infinitely better, that is, he will translate us to the Happiness of the future State, which is most particularly annexed to this Beatitude at the next Verse: *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven.*

But I shall refer this great Encouragement to the next Opportunity, that we may have Time

to consider it more at Leisure than could be expected now in the End of a Sermon. I recommend what has been said to your serious Meditations, and your Meditations to God's Blessing. *To him be all Praise, &c.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X I X .

MAT. V. 12.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.

The Fifth Sermon on this Text.

OUR blessed Saviour having insisted more largely on this last, than on any of the other Beatitudes, it will not be thought strange, I hope, that we dwell longer upon it, it being my Design chiefly to open up and recommend his Notions and Sentiments, and to apply them to our own Use and Practice, as we see he recommended them to the Practice of his Disciples.

In treating of this *Beatitude of Patience under Sufferings*, there were three Branches, I observed, of our Saviour's Discourse.

1. That he pronounces a Blessing in general to all that are *persecuted for Righteousness sake*, with a particular Encouragement, that *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

2. That he applies this general Doctrine to his Disciples, acquainting them, that this blessed
State

State of suffering Persecution for his sake and the Gospel's, should be their Lot and Portion. *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.*

3. That he gives his Directions to his Disciples, as to their patient and chearful Deportment under their persecuted Circumstances, and comforts them with the Promise of a great Reward in Heaven, and with the Encouragement that in such Circumstances they are in the right Way thither, it being the same Way which the Prophets had gone before them. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

Now having in some former Discourses considered the *first* and *second* of these, namely, the Blessing pronounced in general to them who should be *persecuted for Righteousness sake*, with our Saviour's Prediction, that this should be the Lot of his Disciples; I come now to the *third* and *last*, namely, the Directions and Comforts he suggests in such a Case, which are contained in this 12th Verse: *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.*

In the Words we may observe these two Things:

1. A comfortable Direction, when we suffer for *Christ* or our Duty: *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.*

2. The Reasons of that Direction, which are two; one taken from the great Reward prepared for such Sufferers in Heaven, for *great is your Reward*

Reward in Heaven; the other from the most honourable Company of the Prophets it places them in, at the same Time separating them from that worst of Company, and worst of Characters, the Persecutors; *For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.*

I begin with the comfortable Direction, how we are to behave ourselves, when we are put to suffer unjustly for *Christ* or our Duty. *Rejoice*, says our Saviour, *and be exceeding glad.* If we consider the Spirit of the World, there is nothing to which it has a greater Aversion than to this bearing of the Cross; and whenever the Necessity of their hard Fate is such, that they cannot avoid it, they are so far from undergoing it cheerfully, that they resist and oppose it with all the Fury and Violence they can, to that Degree, that they value not what Disorders and Confusions they bring into the World by their Opposition and Resistance: But we have not so learned *Christ*. Whosoever they are that thus flee to the Arms of Resistance to oppose the Cross, must take Care that they go upon a good Foot, as to their temporal Rights and Privileges; I mean not only that they have a good Cause, but likewise that the Laws allow them to defend it in such a Manner, otherwise they have no Encouragement from *Christ's* Doctrine or Example to any Thing else in such a Case, besides a cheerful passive Obedience. Some others there are, who, tho' they will not flee to the Arms of Resistance, when called to suffer, do yet discharge that Duty in such a repining, discontented Manner, that it favours more of a Spirit of Pride, Anger, and Resentment, than of the meek and humble Spirit of the Gospel,

pel, which, as appears from my Text, is to take Sufferings not only patiently, but joyfully. *Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your Goods*, says the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Heb. x. 34. And the Apostles came away from the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Christ, Acts v. 41. This Precept in my Text stands in direct Opposition to that melancholy, dumpish, dejected Spirit, which is so far from being chearful under Troubles, that it is scarce ever satisfied with any Circumstances of Life at all, tho' ever so easy and comfortable. There is no sort of People contribute more to bring up a bad Report on Religion, and the true Fear of God, than these uneasy, melancholy, discontented Persons, who are always fretting and repining at every Thing, and behave themselves so, as if they thought it inconsistent with a Spirit of Religion, ever to be gay or merry, or to look chearful and well pleased. These Persons are like the evil Spies whom *Joshua* sent to view the Land of *Canaan*, who being fearful and cowardly themselves, and their Fears, as is usual, magnifying all Dangers, made it their Business to spread their Fears through the whole Camp of *Israel*, and to discourage the Hearts, and weaken the Hands of the People, by telling them, that it was a Land which ate up its Inhabitants, and that the People they saw in it were of great Stature, and that there were Giants there, in Comparison of whom they themselves seemed to be but so many Grasshoppers, *Numb. xiii. 32*. Thus these sad melancholy People, with their discontented Thoughts, and rueful Faces, bring up an evil Report on the *Christian Religion*, as if it were a Re-

ligion which deprives the Mind of all true Comfort and Joy, and possesses it with Sorrow and Melancholy.

To obviate all these dishonourable Notions of Religion, and withal to help us to a right Sense of this Duty of preserving a chearful Mind, and a Spirit of Joy and Gladness under the hardest Circumstances of the Cross, I shall apply myself to the following Particulars:

I. To consider the Nature and Importance of this Duty of *Rejoicing, and being exceeding glad, when we suffer for Christ, or for Righteousness.*

II. Because this seems extreme difficult and unnatural, it will be fit to consider the Grounds and Reasons of the Duty, in order to recommend it to our Esteem and Affection.

III. I will point at some Ways and Means to facilitate the Practice of it.

I. *First*, then, Let us consider the Nature and Importance of this Duty of *Rejoicing, and being exceeding glad, when we suffer for Christ, or for Righteousness.* The Mirth of the World is commonly a vain, foolish, and unreasonable Thing, as being either a Suppression of Thought, under Pretence of laying aside all Care; and this is done by a Clutter of Company, an Intoxication of Drink, the lulling asleep of the Thoughts by Musick, Gaming, or Theatrical Diversions, the Witchcraft of Lust and carnal Pleasure, or any other Thing of that Nature, which takes the Mind off the Hinges, and hinders it from reflecting on the numerous Troubles of Life, or the greater ones of Death, Judgment, and Eternity:

Or

Or else this worldly Mirth and Joy is occasioned by some temporary Felicity and Success in acquiring a large Share of the Things of this World, like the rich Man in the Gospel, who fed his Joy from the Consideration of his full Barns; *Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry*, Luke xii. 19. But this Duty of *rejoicing* in my Text, is a much more solid and serious Thing than that it can be founded on either of these Bottoms; it is so far from being grounded on an Absence or Deprivation of Thought, that it requires a thorough Consideration of intellectual as well as sensual, and of eternal as well as temporal Matters; and it is likewise so far from resting on Creature-Comforts without God, that the very Life and Essence of it consists in an Acquiescence in God's Will and Pleasure, in a Conformity of the Heart and Thoughts to his Sentiments, in the Testimony of our Consciences, that we follow such Courses as please him best; and in the well-grounded Hope of the Enjoyment and Fruition of him to all Eternity. A Regard to God is so essential to this Joy, that in the holy Scriptures it usually enters into the Definition or Description of it; for it is called *a Rejoicing in the Lord*, or *a Rejoicing in Christ Jesus*, or *a Rejoicing in hope of the Glory of God*, or *the having Peace in Christ, tho' we have Trouble from the World*, or *Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost*, or *the being filled with all Peace and Joy in believing*. So necessary it is that God be the Object of this Joy. I shall next briefly consider the Acts of it.

1. The principal Act of this Duty of Rejoicing, and which is the Foundation of all the rest,

is a prevalent Love to God, which disposes us to a Conformity to his blessed Will in all Things, and rejoices in every Thing that may fit us for the Enjoyment of him, be it ever so afflicting and grievous at present. The Apostle *St. Paul*, speaking of this same Duty of Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God, with all the blessed Fruits and Effects of it, assigns the Reason of all to be, *Because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*, Rom. v. 5.

2. Another Act of this Duty of Rejoicing, when we are *reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake*, is the great Duty of Self-Resignation: *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, Mat. xxvi. 39. By this Duty we oblige ourselves not only to an external Compliance with the most afflicting Dispensations of God's Providence, but to an internal Approbation of the Wisdom and Goodness of them, as being entirely wrapt up in the Will of God, and knowing and believing that he contrives all for our Benefit; particularly, that Persecutions and Afflictions are excellent Means to wean our Hearts from the World, and to settle them in the Love of Heaven.

3. Another Link of this Chain of Duties, annexed to rejoicing and being exceeding glad in the Text, is, Patience under Troubles. For whereas the Uneasiness of Impatience creates Melancholy, which is a fruitful Source of all Grief and Vexation; on the contrary, the suppressing of all these uneasy Resentments, which is the Work of Patience, is a great Part of the Business of this chearful Temper of Mind here recommended. The Apostle *St. Paul* yokes these

two Graces together, *Rejoicing in Hope, and patient in Tribulation*, Rom. xii. 12.

4. Contentment is another Duty flowing from this chearful Temper of Mind; for it is impossible, where the Spirit is so chearful under Afflictions and Persecutions, that there can be any Thing like Murmuring or Discontent: Nay, indeed this chearful Temper imports some higher Degree of Satisfaction than bare Contentment, even a Gratitude and Thankfulness to Almighty God under his Corrections.

5. This Temper of Mind implies a lively Hope of good Things to come in a future State. This is included in that Prospect and Regard to the great Reward to come, which immediately follows: *Great is your Reward in Heaven*. This Eye to the Recompence of Reward keeps up the Heart under all its present Afflictions, as the Psalmist says; *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the Goodness of the Lord in the Land of the Living*, Psal. xxvii. 13.

6. From all these results a constant Spring of Joy, such as no Melancholy or disastrous Accidents can dry up; other worldly Joys may be loud and noisy, but they are short-liv'd, like *the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot*, to which Solomon compares *the Laughter of the Fool*, Eccl. vii. 6. But this is a permanent Joy, that will stick by a Man in all the Changes of outward Fortune; Let ever so bad Tidings be brought him, they shake him no more than the Waves do a firm Rock, according to those Observations of the Psalmist's, *Unto the Upright there ariseth Light in the Darkeness: Surely he shall not be moved for ever: He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings, his*

Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psal. cxii. 4, 6, 7. And elsewhere he makes his Boast, God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in Trouble; therefore will not we fear, tho' the Earth be removed, and tho' the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea; tho' the Waters thereof roar and be troubled; tho' the Mountains shake with the swelling thereof: There is a River, the Streams whereof shall make glad the City of God, the holy Place of the Tabernacles of the most High, Psal. xlv. 1.

7. *Lastly, Another Ingredient of this chearful Temper of Mind, is a sedate Courage, not to be conquer'd by all the most formidable Things in Nature. It is written, saith St. Paul, For thy sake are we killed all the Day long; we are accounted as Sheep for the Slaughter. Nay, in all these Things we are more than Conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii. 36.*

So much for the Nature and Importance of the Duty of Chearfulness under Persecution for our Duty here enjoined; but because this seems a little difficult and unnatural under such grievous Affliction, I shall therefore proceed,

II. *Secondly, As I propos'd, To consider the Grounds and Reasons of the Duty, in order to recommend it to our Esteem and Affection.*

I. Then, It may recommend this Duty to us, that it is one of the chiefest Points of Honour in the *Christian Church*, thus chearfully to suffer for

for *Christ*. As, among Soldiers, the highest Post of Honour is that which exposes them most to Danger, so it is in the *Christian Warfare*; it is reckon'd the chief Post of Honour to suffer for the Name of *Christ*. So we find the Apostles esteemed it; for after having been beaten in the *Jewish Council* for preaching the Faith of *Christ*, they looked upon it as a most happy and honourable Thing: For it is said, *They went away from the Presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Jesus*, Acts v. 41. And in that great Character which was given by our Lord of St. *Paul* to *Ananias*, who was prepossess'd with a bad Opinion of him, this of his Sufferings for *Christ* makes the chiefest Flower; *Go thy Way*, says he, *for he is a chosen Vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel: For I will shew him how great Things he must suffer for my Name's sake*, Acts ix. 16. This of suffering for *Christ*, is a much higher Step of Honour than the bare believing in him, as we may gather from St. *Paul's* Encomium to the *Philippians*. *Unto you it is given*, says he, *in the Behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 29.

2. Suffering chearfully to Martyrdom for *Christ* will be honour'd by God with the highest Honours in Heaven. This is plainly implied in our Saviour's Answer to the Request of the Mother of *Zebedee's* Children, which was, *That they might sit one on his Right Hand, the other on his Left in his Kingdom*, Mat. xx. 22. To this Request he first replied, that *They knew not what they asked*; for, indeed, they understood great temporal Ho-

nours by that Request: And, withal, he adds something to let them understand, that whosoever arriv'd at those first Places in his Kingdom, must come at them in the way of Suffering, in which he was to give them an Example. *Are ye able*, says he, *to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* Now it appears afterwards, that by *the Cup*, he meant the bitter Cup of his Passion. *If it be possible*, says he, *let this Cup pass from me*, Mat. xxvi. 39. And the same is meant by the Baptism; *I have a Baptism*, says he, *to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* Luke xii. 50. And therefore the plain Importance of his Question to the Sons of Zebedee was, *Are ye able to undergo Martyrdom for the Truth, as I shall?* For to such the highest Places in my Kingdom are reserved. And is not this most agreeable to what follows in my Text? *Great is your Reward in Heaven.* The Phrase is not, as in some of the other Beatitudes, *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; but, *Great is your Reward in Heaven*: Meaning, that the most honourable, and most happy Stations in Heaven itself, shall be conferr'd upon them who chearfully suffer for *Christ's* sake.

3. Suffering chearfully for Righteousness sake, is the greatest Service which can be done to the Church, whether for propagating the Faith among Infidels, or for confirming true Believers. Perhaps, next to Miracles, and the wonderful holy Lives of the first *Christians*, there was nothing contributed more to awaken the secure World to the Consideration of the Doctrine of *Christianity*, than the strange Courage of the
Martyrs

Martyrs who so freely and chearfully laid down their Lives for the Truth, to that Degree, that it became a common Observation, that the Blood of the Martyrs was the Seed of the Church. And as to Believers themselves, it must needs be a great Confirmation of their Faith, and contribute mightily to the enlivening of their Courage, to see the Chearfulness and Bravery of their Fellow-*Christians*. As in an Army Courage inspires Courage into our Fellow-Soldiers; so it is among *Christians*, especially while they all firmly believe that not one of those who die thus bravely confessing *Christ*, shall go without his Reward. In common Armies, there is many a Man behaves himself gallantly, who yet has no Reward bestowed upon him; perhaps they are all so brave, that the Merits of one are not to be distinguished from those of another; perhaps every gallant Action doth not come to the Knowledge of the General, or of the Prince; or, if it doth, they have not Places or Rewards for all: But there are better Orders observed in this noble Army of Martyrs. Here no Man's Chearfulness or Courage in *Christ's* Service, is in Danger of being either unknown, or overlooked. So surely and so quickly do the Rewards follow the Sufferings.

4. This Chearfulness of Mind, which disposes us to rejoice under Sufferings, is so excellent a Quality, that it fits and enlivens us to set about every Duty with Courage and Alacrity. The Person who is possessed of this good Temper, is in no Danger of Drooping and Despondency, of Sloth and Laziness, of Off-puts and Delays, of Fear and Cowardice, or of any of those many Snares and Temptations which are occasioned by

Melan-

Melancholy and Dejection of Mind. Such a Person chearfully wades thro' all Troubles, encounters the greatest Dangers, and has the most composed Mind, and regular Thoughts, and consequently is in the fittest Temper and Disposition for Duty at all Times, and in all the most disastrous Circumstances of Life.

5. *Lastly*, It is sufficient to recommend this Chearfulness in Suffering, that it is so good a Mark of the right Way which leads to Heaven and Happiness, both as it has been the usual Fate of the best Men, especially the great Reformers of Mankind, to be so ill used by the World, and likewise most patiently and chearfully to undergo these Persecutions. *First*, I say, It has been their usual Fate to be very ill used by the World. It was a strange Question of St. Stephen's to the Jews, *Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted?* Acts vii. 52. So general was the Observation, that he challenged them to produce him so much as one Exception. This Observation had been made to his Hand by our Saviour in my Text. *So persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* And elsewhere he tells them, *Behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise Men, and Scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City; that upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias, Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar,* Mat. xxiii. 34. And as it has been the Fate of good Men and holy Prophets, to be thus persecuted; it has likewise been their constant Manner
patiently

patiently and chearfully to suffer these Persecutions. They never fled to the Arms of Resistance, nor studied Revenge, but thought it a great Honour and Happiness to suffer for their Duty: So that the being of a bloody, persecuting Spirit, is a Character appropriated to the Wicked of the World; but the patient and chearful bearing of Persecution, is the Character of the Godly in all Ages: It is a great Comfort to be found in so good Company as that of *Moses* and the Prophets, *Christ* and the Apostles. While we are in their Company, and are acted by their Spirit, and behave ourselves as they did, we may comfortably assure ourselves that we are in the right Way to Heaven; which, to be assured of, is the greatest Comfort upon Earth. So much for the Reasons of the Duty. As to the Means for facilitating the Practice of it, I find, for want of Time, I must leave them to another Opportunity.

S E R M O N XX.

M A T. V. 12.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.

The Sixth Sermon on this Text.

IN my last Discourse there were two Things I observed from these Words:

1. A comfortable Direction when we suffer for *Christ* or our Duty. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.*

2. The Reasons of that Direction, which are two: One taken from the great Reward which shall be bestow'd upon such Sufferers in Heaven, for *Great is your Reward in Heaven*; the other, from the honourable Rank it gives them upon Earth, the Company of the Prophets, *For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.*

As to the *first* of these, the comfortable Direction given to *Christians*, when they suffer for *Christ*, or their Duty, I propos'd to treat of it under these three Heads:

1. To consider the Nature and Importance of this Duty of rejoicing, and being exceeding glad under the Cross.

2. Because

2. Because this seems difficult and unnatural, I proposed to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of the Duty, in order to recommend it to your Esteem and Affection.

3. To point at the Ways and Means to facilitate the Practice of it.

Now having at that Time spoke to the *first* and *second* of these, namely, the Description of the Duty, with the Reasons to recommend it to your Study; I shall proceed now to the Ways and Means to facilitate the Practice of it, and then go on to the two great Motives in the Text, the Greatness of the Reward in Heaven, and the Usage of the Prophets.

III. As to the Ways and Means to attain true Joy, it is a very noble and serious Study; for this inward Joy and Chearfulness is not to be procured, as Laughter and noisy Mirth, by breaking of Jest, by the Fumes of Wine and strong Drink, by the Charms of Musick or Lust, no, nor by every Piece of good Luck and worldly Prosperity; this Vein of the finest Metal, like that of pure Gold, lies much deeper, even in upright Intentions towards God, in a good Conscience, in pious Endeavours, in a right Faith, in a lively Hope, in a pure Charity, in a firm Belief and serious Contemplation of the future State, in a Tranquility of Mind, set above the Hopes and Fears of this World, in a Readiness to die, and a Pleasure in doing Good; a State of Mind, in short, which is not to be attained but by a confirmed Habit of Virtue and Goodness, not only external in the Sight of the World, but internal in the Heart and Soul, which is properly the true Seat of Joy and Grief. *Light is sown for the Righteous,*

Righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart, says the Psalmist, *Psal. xcvi. 11.* Even the Light of Nature hath taught some wise Heathens thus much of sound Divinity. *Seneca* says, that true Joy is a very serious Business; *Severa res est verum gaudium*, *Sen. Ep.* And enquiring into the Causes from whence it proceeds, and the Principles of which it is made up, he says it proceeds, *Ex bona conscientia, ex honestis consiliis, ex rectis actionibus, ex contemptu fortuitarum, ex placido vitæ & continuo tenore unam prementis viam:* That is, it proceeds from a good Conscience, from upright Intentions, from right Actions, from a Contempt of Misfortunes, and from a calm and steady Tenour of Life, keeping to one Course.

More particularly, that this inward Peace and Joy, or Alacrity of Mind, is not to be attained in the Ways of Sin and Wickedness, is very plain, both from Scripture and Reason. The Prophet *Isaiab* compares the Wicked, in regard of their inward Perturbation, to a muddy troubled Sea casting up Mire and Dirt. *But the Wicked,* says he, *are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked,* *Isa. lvii. 20.* And right Reason will teach us the same Doctrine. Wicked Men are reduc'd to miserable Shifts, to procure a little inward Quiet; but all will not do. What Joy or Satisfaction can a wicked Man have, who can't yet shake off the Belief of a God, in walking directly contrary to his Precepts, and to the Dictates of his own Conscience, and under the fearful Apprehensions of what is to follow after Death? And to think that a Man can be cured of this, by hardening his Heart into
Atheism

Atheism or Infidelity, is just as if a Man, when he sees a powerful Enemy coming upon him, should wink hard, and pretend not to be afraid. But it is commonly found, that all this hardening of their Hearts will not do, unless by Drink and Lust, Company and Business, they keep their Thoughts in such a perpetual Hurry, as to suppress every serious Thought, and so live the Life, and die the Death of the Beast that hath no Understanding.

And as this Alacrity is not to be attained in the Ways of Sin, so neither is it to be attained by any low or imperfect Endeavours after Holiness and Virtue. While a Man is wavering between God and his Duty, and not yet fixed in any settled good Habits, he is but in an uncomfortable State: All Wavering, and Doubtfulness, and Uncertainty, either of Resolution or Endeavour, are great Enemies to this Alacrity; and, consequently, the more a Man is guilty of any Sin, and the more he is under the Power of any evil Habit, so much the greater Stranger he is to this both Duty and Privilege of inward Peace and Joy. And therefore, among other Things, this should have great Weight with us to keep us from Sin, that every Sin puts us back so far in the Degree of our spiritual Joy and Alacrity, which is a very Heaven upon Earth.

But to go on, and give you a more particular Account what it is that occasions this inward Joy, I shall briefly observe it to you from the holy Scriptures.

I. A lively Faith in *Christ* is attended with great Joy. *Let not your Heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me,* John xiv. 1. This

is the great good News of the Gospel, the News of a Saviour; the Way of being reconciled to God, the betaking ourselves to the right Mediator between God and Man, the believing all those glorious Things which *Christ* has promised in his Gospel, and the believing them so as to comply with the Conditions, and seriously to set about a new Life, which is the Work of true Faith: This, I say, occasions great Joy. So says St. Peter to the *Christians*, to whom he writes: *Who are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation, ready to be revealed in the last Time: Wherein, says he, ye greatly rejoice, tho' now for a Season, if need be, ye are in Heaviness through manifold Temptations. That the Trial of your Faith being much more precious than of Gold that periseth; though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory,* 1 Pet. i. 5.

2. The keeping a good Conscience, is the Way to this inward Joy. Our rejoicing is this, saith St. Paul, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with carnal Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World, 2 Cor. i. 12. This is that merry Heart, that Solomon speaks of, which hath a continual Feast, Prov. xv. 15.

3. This inward Joy is acquir'd by a faithful Discharge of great and difficult Duties, such as suffering resolutely and patiently for the Name of *Christ*; by this Means learning more perfectly the Virtues belonging to a State of Affliction. My
Brethren,

Brethren, says St. James, count it all Joy when ye fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your Faith worketh Patience. But let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, Jam. i. 2. So we find, that The Apostles departed from the Presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for the Name of Christ, Acts v. 41. So the holy Penman of the Epistle to the Hebrews commends the Christians, to whom he writes, for that They took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, knowing that they had in Heaven a better and an enduring Substance, Heb. x. 34. So St. Paul exhorts, that we should shew Mercy, that is, extend our Charity with Chearfulness, Rom. xii. 8. And so a Sublimity or Chearfulness of Mind in a poor Christian, and an Humility or Lowliness of Mind in a rich one, being both very eminent, but very difficult Virtues, St. James exhorts Christians to rejoice, or glory in them: For the Words, I think, if they were justly render'd, would run thus: *Let the Brother of low Degree glory in his Sublimity; but the Rich, in his Humility*, Jam. i. 9. Καυχᾶσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς ἐν τῷ ὑψεῖ αὐτοῦ. Ὁ δὲ πλούσιος, ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει αὐτοῦ. In general there is Matter of rejoicing, whenever we have atchieved any noble, difficult Piece of Service in the Way of Christian Duty; and therefore there is no surer Way to attain to this Alacrity of Mind, than couragiously to undergo all the Parts of the Christian Warfare, and never to flinch from any Duty.

4. A settled inward Joy follows a confirmed Sincerity, or Christian Perfection in Virtue. There is a Passage in St. Paul's Second Epistle to the

Corinthians, which, in the Original, I thus understand; *Finally, Brethren, rejoice, be perfect, be of good Comfort*, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. χαίρετε, καταρτίζεσθε, παρακαλεσθε, &c. From whence I would observe, that rejoicing, and being of good Comfort, go along with being perfect. The same Doctrine I observed before from a Passage of the Psalmist's, where he says, that *Light is sown for the Righteous, and Joy for the upright in Heart*, Psal. xcvi. 11.

5. This spiritual Joy, as proceeding from a true Love of God, is occasioned by promoting the Work and Service of God, whether the Propagation of the *Christian Faith*, or *Christians* living up to their holy Profession. *First*, I say, good Men rejoice when the *Christian Faith* is propagated. Thus *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, observing some By-Ends some Men had in preaching the Gospel, and some particular Piques among themselves, or against him, yet concludes thus, *Notwithstanding every Way, whether in Pretence, or in Truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice*, Phil. i. 18. Then they rejoice rather more when *Christians* adorn their Profession with a good Life: *I have no greater Joy*, saith *St. John*, *than to hear that my Children walk in Truth*, John iii. 4. And *St. Paul* calls the *Philippians*, whom he represents as an excellent sort of People, *His Joy and his Crown*, Phil. iv. 1. and says, *He thanks God upon every Remembrance of them, in all his Prayers making Request with Joy, for their Fellowship in the Gospel from the first Day* [of their receiving the Gospel] *to that Time*, chap. i. 3.

6. *Lastly*,

6. *Lastly*, This inward Alacrity and Joy is occasioned by a near Prospect of the Joys of Heaven; and therefore this Rejoicing is called *a Rejoicing in Hope*. St. Paul tells the Romans, that by *Christ we have Access by Faith into this Grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*, Rom. v. 2. And elsewhere we find the same Apostle rejoicing mightily, upon the Prospect of the Crown of Righteousness, which was laid up for him after all his Labours; *I am now ready to be offered*, says he, *and the Time of my Departure is at Hand; I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day*, 2 Tim. iv. 6. And this, perhaps, may be one good Reason of the extraordinary Joy of the Martyrs, that they have so near a Prospect of their Crown, there being nothing to intervene to disappoint them of it.

From all which we may gather, that the best Way to attain this Alacrity and Chearfulness of Mind, is, by having a lively Faith in *Christ*, by keeping a good Conscience, by faithfully discharging all the most difficult Duties, by pressing on towards higher and higher Measures of *Christian* Perfection, and by doing what we can towards the Propagation of Faith and good Life in the World, and by taking a near Prospect of Glory and Immortality, and putting ourselves in the best Preparation and Disposition for it; all which do concur in this patient and joyful Suffering to Martyrdom. And being in so good Disposition, we shall with Joy wait for the coming of our Lord, and chearfully go forth and meet him.

So much for the Ways and Means to facilitate this Duty of rejoicing under the Cross.

I proceed next to a more particular Consideration of the two great Motives to this Duty in the Text, the Greatness of their Reward in Heaven, and the Usage of the Prophets.

To begin with the *first*, the Greatness of their Reward, for *Great is your Reward in Heaven*. In speaking to which, there are these two Things will deserve to be consider'd:

1. How there comes to be any *Reward in Heaven* of our imperfect, and very undeserving Services here upon Earth.

2. Why it is said, with a particular Emphasis, that *Great is their Reward in Heaven*.

1. It may be asked, with good Reason, how there comes to be any Encouragement in Heaven for our poor Services here upon Earth? Especially it is very strange that this Encouragement should go by the Name of *Reward*, as if there were any Equality between it and the Service. I shall briefly answer both these Questions, before I come to the principal Thing in this Promise, the Greatness of the Reward.

As to the *first*, Considering the great Imperfection of our Services, (the very best of them,) and the present Blessings annexed to those Services in an inward Peace and Tranquility, and the Satisfaction of our own Minds and Consciences, we may well think them amply enough rewarded, tho' there were no further Retribution in Revelation. And indeed I think it must be put upon the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God, and not any Thing of our Deserts, that there are further Rewards (especially such glorious ones) of our
poor

poor Services in the World to come. And since there are such, it was highly congruous that our Saviour should acquaint his Disciples with them, more especially considering the present Occasion and Circumstances: For in the foregoing Part of this Sermon he had cut off his Disciples from all their worldly Hopes of an earthly Kingdom; disappointing them in their Expectations of Wealth and Honour, carnal Pleasure and Revenge; shewing them the Necessity of Justice, Mercifulness, inward Purity, Peaceableness, and Patience. He had likewise foretold what hard Fate his Disciples should have in the World; that *Men should revile them, and persecute them, and say all manner of Evil against them falsely for his sake.* And therefore there could be nothing more proper, or more seasonable, than to comfort them with those glorious Promises relating to his heavenly Kingdom, by opening this great Secret, that this present Life is only a State of Probation for a better, and that the Happiness he design'd for them was not an earthly, but an heavenly Happiness. But more particularly to give an Account of this Point, and to shew the Necessity of the Promise of a Reward in Heaven, let the following Particulars be consider'd, which Time will not allow me to enlarge upon.

1. Let it be consider'd, that this is a more express Promise of the Happiness of Heaven than any that went before; for tho' the Encouragement annexed to two of the Beatitudes be, *For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; and to another, that *they shall see God*; and to another, that *they shall be called the Children of God*; and to another, that *they shall be filled*: Yet all these are capable

of other sound Interpretations, tho' the Happiness of Heaven should not be in them expressly promised. For the Phrase of the Kingdom of Heaven, that theirs is that Kingdom, most commonly signifies no more, but that such and such Persons are fittest for the evangelical State, or to be *Christ's* Disciples, or to be Members of his Kingdom, without as yet determining what the Nature of that Kingdom was. And all the other Expressions are very capable of being interpreted in a sound Sense of Mercies spiritual and temporal, bestow'd in this Life, without excluding the other of heavenly Happiness: But this Promise of a *Great Reward in Heaven* is so home and express, that it must signify the heavenly Felicity, and that only.

2. Let it be consider'd, that Man being made up of a mortal Body, and an immortal Soul, it is not possible that he could ever be compleatly happy by all the Blessings of this Life, were they ever so great, without an Happiness of eternal Duration. *What would it profit a Man, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Mark viii. 36. The Blessings of the future State, if they were no greater in Degree, (as they most certainly are) yet would be infinitely more valuable, upon account of their eternal Duration.

3. Let it be consider'd, that there is no such perfect Enjoyment of God in this World, but that we are still capable of much higher Degrees of that Enjoyment, than the Necessities, and Cares, and Troubles, and Pains, and Sickneses incident to Body and Mind, will permit us to be capable of here.

4. Let it be consider'd, that the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this World is very unequal, and therefore that it is highly necessary that there be another State of Rewards and Punishments appointed after this Life, in which God's Providence shall be vindicated, and good Men rewarded, and wicked Men punished.

5. Let it be consider'd, that the great Principle our Saviour recommended, was that of Faith, and that Faith is the *Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. It would then have been very preposterous in our Lord, and very unsuitable to this Principle of Faith, to have bestow'd upon us only present Blessings.

6. Let it be consider'd, that the great Aim and Design of the *Christian* Religion, is to wean our Hearts from the World, and to raise them to Heaven. Now nothing could have been more inconsistent with this Design, than to propose to us only temporal Promises; for as our Hopes and Aims are, so will be our Endeavours and Performances.

7. Let it be consider'd, that as the Difficulties of Obedience and Patience are very great, it requires a strong Consolation of an eternal Happiness to wade through them, that so *for the Joy set before us, we may endure the Cross, and despise the Shame*, Heb. xii. 2.

8. *Lastly*, As to the Question, Whether Virtue is not a sufficient Reward to itself in this World? Suppose it were, This Reward is but secret; Vice often triumphs in Publick, and it would be too great an Encouragement to it, if there were not a more publick, as well as a more real State of

Retribution. The present Contentment which attends good Actions, is an Argument that there is a wise and good God who has so order'd Matters, that Virtue has always some Happiness, and Vice some Misery annex'd; but that is more like an Earnest Penny, than a full Reward. The infinite publick Disorders of Mankind require a more publick Vindication of Justice, than is usually to be seen in this lower World.

So much for the Account of this Matter, why it is necessary that there should be a Retribution in Heaven.

But, then, why must this Retribution be called a Reward, as if it bore any Proportion to our mean Services, as Wages does to Labour? To this there is a very proper Answer, by distinguishing between a Reward of Debt, where the Reward is strictly due, as an Equivalent for the Service, and a Reward of Grace or Favour, where the Generosity and Bounty of the Rewarder gives much more than the Service deserves. This is St. Paul's Distinction, *Now to him that worketh, says he, is the Reward not reckon'd of Grace, but of Debt*, Rom. iv. 4. But this Reward in Heaven is a Reward of Grace, there being infinitely more of Bounty in it than Desert. For, *first*, it proceeds from the Goodness of God, and is called his Gift; *The Wages of Sin is Death*, says St. Paul, *but the Gift of God is eternal Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. *Then* it is the Purchase not of our Righteousness, but of the Merits and Performances of Christ. *He hath made us accepted*, says the Apostle, *in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6. It is for his sake that our imperfect Services are so highly rewarded. And, *lastly*, this Reward

is owing to the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God: To his Wisdom, that he has thought fit, for the better Government of Mankind, to propose such a noble Reward; to his Justice, that he is exactly and punctually true to his Word; and to his Mercy, that he did not take the Forfeiture of our original and actual Guilt, but graciously contriv'd this Way of saving us by a Redeemer, upon very small and disproportion'd Services of our own. So much for the Word *Reward*.

The *last* Thing to be consider'd in this Expression, is, the Greatness of the Reward to those Sufferers for *Christ* and their Duty; *Great is your Reward in Heaven*. In which there are two Things will fall in properly to be discuss'd: 1. Whether there is any Difference in the Degrees of Rewards in Heaven, so that one may be really said to be greater than another. 2. Why a great Reward is promised and given to them who suffer patiently for *Christ* and their Duty. But these are two Points of that Importance, that I can't expect to be able to handle them to any Purpose now in the End of a Sermon: And therefore I shall chuse to refer them to another Opportunity.

Now God follow with his Blessing what ye have heard, and give you a right Understanding in all Things.

To this great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, &c.

S E R M O N XXI.

MAT. V. 12.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.

The Seventh Sermon on this Text.

HAVING consider'd the comfortable Direction in these Words, of *Rejoicing, and being exceeding glad*, when we have the Honour to suffer for *Christ*, or our Duty; I proceeded to the Consideration of the Reasons wherewith it is here enforced, the Greatness of the Reward in Heaven, and the Example of the Prophets.

As to the *first*, the *Greatness of the Reward in Heaven*, upon this I have already accounted for the Reasonableness of a Reward in Heaven for our imperfect Services here upon Earth, and intend to go on now both to consider the Circumstance of the *Greatness of this Reward*, and why it is particularly promised to Confessors and Martyrs, for such are they who suffer for *Christ* and their Duty.

I. To begin with the *first*, *The Greatness of the Reward in Heaven*, provided for them who suffer for *Christ*; *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For*
great

great is your Reward in Heaven. These Words may either be understood concerning the heavenly Felicity in general, as if our Lord had said, *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for ye shall have Heaven for your Reward*; or it may be understood as a Promise of an high Degree of Glory in Heaven: As if he had said, *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for proportionably to your great Sufferings for Christ, and your Duty upon Earth, your Reward shall be so much the greater in Heaven.* It is this last, which seems to me to be the proper Scope and Meaning in this Place, chiefly for the following Reasons: 1. Because we have hitherto seen that the Promise annexed to each Beatitude has been something peculiarly adapted and suited to it, and rising indeed out of it. Now to whom can the Greatness of the Reward more peculiarly belong, than to them who undergo the greatest and most difficult Duties, such as that of Confessors and Martyrs is? 2. The Expression not only points at Heaven as the Place and State, representing to us the heavenly Felicity, but at an high Degree of Felicity in that State; it is not only said, *Your Reward is in Heaven*, but *Great is your Reward in Heaven.* 3. The Comparison with the Prophets, which immediately follows, favours this Sense; *So persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* It is true, the Comparison runs upon the Likeness of their Sufferings, but if the Sufferings are equal, why not the Rewards? Now we find the Reward of a Prophet is elsewhere expressly distinguish'd from the Reward of an ordinary good or righteous Man, and set above it. It is a very remarkable Passage in the 10th Chapter of this Gospel, and deserves to be particularly

cularly consider'd, upon Occasion of this Subject; *He that receiveth a Prophet, saith our Saviour, in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward; and he that receiveth a righteous Man, in the Name of a righteous Man, shall receive a righteous Man's Reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a Cup of cold Water only, in the Name of a Disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his Reward, Mat. x. 41.* Where there seem to be three several Degrees of Hospitality recommended, and as many Degrees of Rewards described and promised. The first, and the highest, is, the Reception and Entertainment of a Prophet, which in Times of Persecution (their usual Lot) was attended with a great deal of Danger. And to this is promised *A Prophet's Reward*; which is an eminent Place in Glory. So we are told in the Prophecy of Daniel, that *They who are wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever, Dan. xii. 3.* The second is the Reception and Entertainment of any good Man, which, as it was not attended with so great Danger, so a less Reward, called *A righteous Man's Reward*, is promised to it. And the third is the least of all, the giving a Cup of cold Water to any private Christian, which, our Saviour tells us, shall likewise be consider'd, and *not lose its Reward.*

Taking the Words, then, in this Sense, there are these two Things will require to be accounted for from them.

I. That there are different Degrees of Rewards in Heaven.

II. Why

II. Why such an high Degree of Reward is promised to them who suffer for *Christ*.

I. *First*, The Words import, that there are different Degrees of Rewards in Heaven; *Great is your Reward in Heaven*. Now this being a Doctrine, the Truth of which is disputed by some Divines, I shall first briefly prove it from Scripture and Reason, and then endeavour to make some good Use of it, for our Edification.

As for Scripture Light in this Particular, there are these few Things I would offer to your Consideration: 1. The Parable of the Pounds, *Luke xix. 12.* in which we may observe, that the Reward of the several Servants is proportion'd to their various Improvements of the Money entrusted with them: To him that with his Pound had gained ten Pounds, Authority was given over ten Cities; and to him whose Pound had gained five Pounds, Authority is given over five Cities. And lest it should be alledged, that the Rewards pointed at in that Parable, are to be understood only of the several Measures of Grace which are increased according to our greater or lesser Improvements of them, this may be cleared from the Parable of the Talents, *Mat. xxv.* where it is plain the Proceedings there described relate to the Day of Judgment; and the Words, *Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*, do plainly point at everlasting Happiness, as these other Words, *Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkeness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth*, do point at Hell-Torments. 2. Another Passage of Scripture, countenancing this Doctrine, is that of *St. Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 6.* where, exhorting the *Corinthians*

thians to a bountiful Charity, he useth these Words; *But this, I say, he who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.* Which Expressions do plainly point at a more or less plentiful Harvest, according to our greater or lesser Degrees of Diligence in doing Good. 3. It is plain from Scripture, that there will be different Degrees of Punishment, and then why not, likewise, different Degrees of Rewards in the future State? Our Saviour acquaints the Cities, wherein most of his mighty Works were done, that as their Sin was greater, so their Punishment should be more intolerable than that of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and even *Sodom* itself. *Wo unto thee Chorazin: Wo unto thee Bethsaida: For if the mighty Works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in Sackcloth and Ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell: For if the mighty Works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this Day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the Land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee,* Mat. xi. 20. Now by the Rule of Contraries, as higher Degrees of Sin shall be more grievously punish'd, so higher Degrees of Virtue shall be more amply rewarded. 4. I observe, when the future Reward in holy Scripture is promis'd, with the Addition of Words importing the extraordinary Greatness of it, it is commonly annex'd to very difficult Duties, and extraordinary Services; such

as great Labours in the Work of the Gospel, Martyrdom, Innocence, Love of Enemies, great Charities, and the like; as by the following Passages may appear. *Love your Enemies, and do Good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your Reward shall be great, and ye shall be the Children of the Highest, Luke vi. 35. Give, and it shall be given unto you, good Measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall be given into your Bosom, Luke vi. 38. Lo a great Multitude, which no Man could number, of all Nations, and Kindreds, and People, and Tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white Robes, and Palms in their Hands. And afterwards, Rev. vii. 9. it is explain'd, that They who were arrayed in white Robes, are such as came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the Throne of God, ver. 14. And elsewhere, They who sung the new Song before the Throne, are described to be such as were not defiled with Women; and such in whose Mouth there was no Guile, Rev. xiv. 3. To which we may add what St. Peter says, Rejoice in as much as ye are Partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his Glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy, 1 Pet. iv. 13.*

And right Reason is as consonant to Scripture in this, as in other Matters. For, 1. Since there are Degrees of Grace and Virtue so vastly different, why not, likewise, of Rewards in Glory? Is it reasonable that he who has taken but an ordinary Care in this spiritual Negociation, should be equall'd with him who has used double Diligence? For tho' the Reward of all is far above what

what any one deserves, and is of Grace, not of Debt; yet God is pleased, both in the Dispensation of his Graces here, and in conferring his Rewards hereafter, to set to himself some Rules of Justice and Equity, as well as of Goodness and Mercy: So that if a Man abounds ever so much in the Works of the Lord, yet none of his Labour shall be in vain, or superfluous, 1 Cor. xv. 58. And tho' our Services are ever so inconsiderable, tho', as St. Paul says, *Neither is he that planteth any Thing, neither he that watereth*, yet, as he there tells us, *every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour*, 1 Cor. iii. 7. Words, than which, I think, none can be more express for a particular Reward in Glory, suited to every one's Graces and Virtues. And so in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, he gives us to understand, that *Whatsoever good Thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord*, Eph. vi. 8. 2. The Nature of the divine Justice seems to require this, for otherwise there would be only Encouragement for us to endeavour to get into the lowest Class and Form of Saints, but not to grow in Grace, and in every good Work; whereas we are encourag'd to *leave the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, and to go on to Perfection*, Heb. vi. 1. and are assured, that *God is not unrighteous, to forget our Work and Labour of Love, which we shew toward his Name, in ministering to the Saints*. And we are exhorted, *Everyone of us to shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End, and that we be not slothful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises*, at the 10th, 11th, and 12th Verses. Certainly every Man's Reason approves of this Doctrine

Doctrine in other Things. *David* had many Men in his Armies, who being all true to him, deserv'd to be rewarded; but there were some who distinguish'd themselves by their extraordinary Merits and Services, that were called *David's mighty Men*, whom he preferr'd to the greatest Offices. We have a Catalogue of them, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. Now would any one think it just that these great Men should meet with no better Reward of their Services than the meanest common Soldier that had been true to his Prince? And by the same Way of arguing, I can't much doubt, for my Part, but that there will be very considerable Differences made in Glory, according to the different Degrees of Zeal and Diligence we employ here in God's Service. I can't believe, for Example, that an old Sinner, who has spent his Youth, and the chief Part of his Life, in the Service of his Lusts, tho' he should come to himself in his old Age, and take up, and heartily repent and amend, and so for *Christ's* sake should obtain Pardon of his Sins, and die well, and get to Heaven at last; I do not believe, I say, that such a one will be preferr'd to as high a Degree of Glory as if he had devoted his whole Life diligently to God's Service. Nor can I believe that every honest *Christian* will attain to the same eminent Degrees of Glory with Confessors and Martyrs, nor that every ordinary good Minister shall arrive at the same Degrees of Glory and Felicity with the Apostles, those noble Heroes of *Christianity*, of whom our Saviour acquaints us, that *They shall sit on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel*, Mat. xix. 28. 3. The Capacities and Dispositions of some being vastly enlarged beyond

those of others, it is but consonant to Reason, that higher Degrees of Glory and Felicity should be bestowed on them, who have the higher Capacities and Dispositions for it. Thus we are told of the hundred forty and four thousand choice Persons, who had the Father's Name written in their Foreheads, that *They sung a new Song before the Throne; and that no Man could learn that Song but they*; Rev. xiv. 1. Now that by that Number are not to be understood the whole Company of the blessed in Heaven, appears by the Characters and Descriptions which are there given of them; namely, that *They are such as were not defiled with Women, for they are Virgins; such likewise as follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; and that in their Mouth was found no Guile, for that they are without fault before the Throne of God*, ver. 4, 5.

There are two or three Objections against this Doctrine, concerning the different Degrees of Glory in Heaven, which it will be necessary to consider, before we come to the Use and Improvement of it.

1. One is taken from the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, *Mat. xx.* where they that were called latest at the eleventh Hour, and so wrought but one Hour, received every Man his Penny, which was as much as was given to the others, who had borne the Burthen and Heat of the Day. From whence some conclude, that in Heaven there will be no Regard to the Services done, but that it will be the Pleasure of the great Landlord to bestow his Rewards upon all his Labourers alike. But for Answer, I say, this Objection is founded on a Mistake concerning the
true

true Scope and Design of that Parable, which doth not aim at representing the State of the Church from the Beginning to the End of the World, or the final Rewards which shall be bestow'd on Believers at the last Day; but only to describe a much shorter Period of Time, namely, the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*; as appears from the *Probandum*, which our Saviour there mentions, both in the Beginning, and at the End of that Parable: Namely, that *The first shall be last, and the last first*. The Penny, then, there spoke of, is the Gospel Privileges, which were equally bestow'd on *Jew* and *Gentile*, and which occasioned a great murmuring among the *Jewish Christians*, that they should be communicated to the *Gentiles* at all. And therefore this Parable is no way pertinent to the Business now under our Consideration, the Penny not being the heavenly Reward; unless we will say that some, after receiving the heavenly Reward, shall be unsatisfied with it, and expect more; and after all that, shall be dismiss'd from the Service: *Go thy Way, &c.* as it follows there in the Parable. Thus, if it be well consider'd, it will be found that the equal Degrees of Glory, as well as the relying on a Death-bed Repentance, which are encouraged from the Misunderstanding of that Parable, are both built on a wrong Foundation.

2. Another Objection against this Doctrine, is taken from the All-sufficiency of the Merits of *Christ*, which, as they alledge, are equally applied to all that have any Interest therein. To this it may be easily answer'd, that if the Merits of *Christ* are considered in themselves, according

to their own Worth and Dignity, and without the Gospel Terms and Conditions, by which we come to have any Interest in them, no doubt they are sufficient to purchase the highest Degree of Felicity, not only to all that shall be saved, but likewise to all that perish. But the Efficacy of *Christ's* Merits, as to us, depends upon certain Conditions, and by those Conditions the Degrees of Glory depend upon the Degrees of Faith and new Obedience; which being vastly different, it remains that the Degrees of Glory will be so too.

3. A third Objection against this Doctrine, is, that it seems to be a Discouragement to ordinary Believers, who can expect to arrive only at the lower Degrees of Glory, and that it will be some Abatement of their Felicity to see others constituted in superior Degrees of Happiness. But this is easily answer'd: For, 1. We are to suppose, that every one in Glory will have a Fulness of Satisfaction, according to their several Dispositions and Capacities, and therefore that a lesser Degree of Glory will make no Abatement of Happiness; as if we fill larger and lesser Vessels out of a great River, they will be all equally full, tho' one contains much more than another. 2. There will be such a perfect Resignation to the Will of God, that whatever Degrees of Glory he appoints, they will all perfectly acquiesce in, and be satisfied with; as knowing that God will bestow the Honours in Heaven by the exactest Rules of Justice and Equity. *To sit on my Right Hand, and on my Left, in my Kingdom, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father,* says our Saviour, *Mat. xx. 23.* 3. I can't see the Consequence, that Inequality

equality of Degrees of Glory and Happiness should make any Uneasiness, or that Levelling which makes Confusion upon Earth, would be the Occasion of Satisfaction in Heaven. The Angels in Glory, we all own, are exceeding happy, yet there are great Degrees and Prerogatives of Honour and Glory among them; we hear of Angels and Archangels, of Thrones and Dominions, of Principalities and Powers; why then should it be thought any Diminution of the Glory of the Saints, to have others advanced to any Degree of Glory above them? For Happiness and Contentment are not restrain'd only to the supreme Degree of Dignity, except we believe that we shall carry Pride and Ambition along with us to Heaven, which, I confess, would make us unhappy, even there.

So much for establishing the Doctrine of the different Degrees of Glory in Heaven. We are, in the last Place, to consider of what Use and Importance it is in a *Christian Life*. And, indeed, the Use of it is plain and obvious, to encourage us to grow in Grace, and always to abound in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Alas! we live in an Age, in which not only wicked Men abound in all manner of Wickedness, but good Men, likewise, are very barren in good Works: We have forgotten almost what it is to *lay up Treasures in Heaven*. We think it very well, if we abstain from gross Vices, and do not *run with others to the same Excess of Riot*; but for any great Fruitfulness in good Works, I doubt there is but little of it in our Thoughts and Study, and I am sure very little there is to be seen in our Lives

and Conversations. If one may apply what our Saviour says of the three Sorts of Servants entrusted with their Lord's Talents, to the several Ages of the Church, we may say, I think, that the Apostles with their Talent gained ten, by their unwearied Diligence and Industry in their Master's Service; and that the primitive Fathers of the Church did so improve their Talents, that with one they gained five: But in these latter Ages we are so barren in all manner of Goodness, that we are like that lazy, saucy Servant, who hid his Lord's Talent in a Napkin, and pretended, too, to justify and excuse it. And indeed I am apprehensive, that by our unwary Confutation of the *Popish* Errors concerning Merit and Supererogation, we have too much depreciated good Works themselves; whereas, it is most certain, they ought to be highly had in Estimation, not only as the genuine Signs and Fruits of a lively Faith, but as necessary Conditions of Salvation, and not only of Salvation, but of our Growth in Grace, and our Advancement to higher Degrees of Glory. If Men did seriously believe that not only every good Person, but likewise every good Action, shall have its due Recompence of Reward, and that all the Good we do here is like good Seed sown in fertile Ground, or like Money put into a profitable thriving Bank, and that it will produce a rich Income and Increase in Glory; that, as the Apostle saith, *It is Fruit that will abound to our Account*, Phil. iv. 17. that *so soon as we rest from our Labours, our good Works shall follow us*, Rev. xiv. 13. they would not be sparing in laying out on so good an Account, but would be continually pouring into this Bank, and would think they could never do
or

or suffer too much for *Christ*, when the very least Service performed to him, even the giving a Cup of cold Water to any *Christian* for his sake, is not to go without its Reward. This would lead me to

II. The *Second* Thing I proposed to consider from this Part of the Words, namely, Why this great Reward is so particularly promised to them that suffer for *Christ*; why annexed to this, more than to any other of the Beatitudes. But because this is a Subject which will require a more particular Consideration than is fit to attempt in the End of a Sermon, I shall refer it to another Opportunity; praying God to follow what we have heard with his Blessing, that it may bring forth Fruit to his Glory, and our Edification and Salvation, through *Jesus Christ*. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XXII.

M A T. V. 12.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: For great is your Reward in Heaven: For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.

The Eighth Sermon on this Text.

AFTER I had spoken to the comfortable Direction here given to those who suffer for *Christ*, and their Duty, that they should rejoice, and be exceeding glad; I came to consider the two Reasons annex'd, the one taken from the Greatness of the Reward prepared for such Sufferers in Heaven; and the other from the like Usage of the Prophets who went before them.

In speaking to the first of these, the *Greatness of their Reward in Heaven*, after interpreting it in this Sense, as if our Saviour had said, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for proportionably to your greater Sufferings upon so good an Account here on Earth, your Reward shall be so much the greater in Heaven:" There were two Things I propos'd to account for from the Words explain'd in that Sense.

1. That there are different Degrees of Rewards in Heaven.

2. Why

2. Why such an high Degree of Reward is promis'd to them who suffer for *Christ*.

Now having at the last Occasion consider'd the *first* of these, namely, the different Degrees of Rewards in Heaven; I shall proceed now to the *second*, and consider why such an high Degree of Reward is promised to them that suffer for *Christ*. Which, together with the Example of the Prophets, is all that remains now to be consider'd from this Text.

This Doctrine, then, as I conceive, may be accounted for on these two Considerations; the Person of *Christ*, on whose Account they suffer, and the Excellency of the Act of patient resolute Suffering.

1. *First*, If we consider the Person of *Christ*, on whose Account they suffer, it is most suitable to his Honour that they who suffer on his Account should be admitted to a great and distinguishing Reward in Heaven. Rewards are dispensed, as upon other Considerations, so particularly according to the Dignity and Generosity of the Person to whom the Service is perform'd. The same Service done to a mean Man, perhaps, is no way rewarded at all, but with Thanks, which, if done to a Prince, would be rewarded with great Honour and Profit: And the Reason is, because every Person of Honour thinks himself obliged to requite Services according to his Quality and Ability, especially if those Services have this obliging Circumstance to recommend them, that they are done to a distressed Prince in his low and afflicted Circumstances, while he is grievously affronted and persecuted by others. All this enhances the Obligation, and if he is a Prince of a grateful,
generous

generous Temper, he will reward all such Kindnesses so much the more, when he is in a Condition to do it, and comes to his Kingdom. Now to apply this to the present Case, we must remember, that the Suffering we now speak of is for *Christ's* sake, as we are told at the preceding Verse; *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake*, Mat. v. 11. In which Description of the Service we may see a plain Foundation laid for the Greatness of the Reward. For, 1. In the Service there is *Suffering*, which is a much higher Degree of Service than *Acting*: Many have the Courage to act for a Person, who have not the Courage to suffer for him. 2. In the Service there is not one Act, or one sort of Suffering only mentioned, but a great Variety thereof; *Reviling, persecuting, and all manner of evil speaking*, and these not from one, but many: *When Men shall revile you, and persecute you*. 3. In the Service, the Innocency of the Sufferer is taken Notice of; the Revilings and evil Speakings are said to be *false*, and the other Sufferings not to be for their own evil Deeds and Demerits, but purely upon *Christ's* Account, *for my sake*. This is the noble Consideration, which gives a Value to all the rest; and, indeed, putting all these together, it amounts to an high Degree of *Christian* Virtue, consequently of Reward in Heaven. For if it is highly equitable, that whoever acts in any good Cause upon Earth, should be rewarded in Heaven, then much more he that suffers in a good Cause. If it is reasonable that every the smallest Suffering in a good Cause should be rewarded, even the daily Acts of Self-denial
and

and bearing the Cross; much more the greater Sufferings in Honour, Estate, and Life. If the Sufferings of a Man, in other respects no very good Man, would yet be valued, and rewarded, much more the Sufferings of a good Man, who suffers purely on a good Account. *Lastly*, If suffering for one's Prince in his low and unfortunate Circumstances, would be reckon'd highly meritorious, so that the Prince, when he comes to his Kingdom, would reckon himself obliged generously to recompence it; how much more shall our suffering for a persecuted, crucified *Christ*, be highly rewarded by him in his heavenly Kingdom? Especially if we consider, that all this arguing from the Example of earthly Princes, holds *à fortiori* in this Case of suffering for *Christ*. For a Man may do, or suffer several Things in the Service of an earthly Prince, and yet that Prince (who sees and hears by other Men's Eyes and Ears) may know nothing of it. Other People may run away with the Praise and Reward of the good Action, when the Prince himself, through Misrepresentation, mistakes the true Author. Sometimes there are so many Persons who have merited well of an earthly Prince, that it is not really in his Power to reward them all, even when he comes to his Kingdom; and frequently good Services are forgotten, for want of a due Measure of Gratitude and Generosity in Princes themselves, their Thoughts being taken up with a Multitude of other Cares and Concerns: And if none of these happens to be the Case, the Prince, for whom the Service was perform'd, may be taken off by Death, before he has rewarded it, and there may happen to succeed another

Pharaoh

Pharaoh that knew not *Joseph*, who, instead of proving a Friend to the Person who merited of his Predecessor, may prove his mortal Enemy. So that the Psalmist might very well say, *Put not your Trust in Princes, nor in the Son of Man, in whom there is no Help; his Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth; in that very Day his Thoughts perish*, Psal. cxlvi. 3. But there is no Fear of any of these Disappointments to them who do any Service, or undergo any Suffering for *Christ*: For, 1. There is no Service, tho' ever so secret, can escape his Eye and Knowledge; *And he that seeth it in secret will reward it openly*, Mat. vi. 4. Nor, 2. Is there any want of Places, Rewards, or Preferments, suited to every one's good Actions and Sufferings, in the Court of Heaven; *Christ* is not a poor Prince, who has but one Blessing, or a few Places in his Gift; *In his Father's House are many Mansions*, John xiv. 2. (that is, good Places and Settlements,) and he is gone to prepare a Place for all his faithful Servants: And as he is gone, he will come again, and receive them to himself, that where he is, they may be also. Nor, 3. Is there any Fear that faithful Services will be either overlook'd by him, or forgot and pass'd by without their due Reward. For, as the Apostle says, *God is not unrighteous to forget our Work and Labour of Love, which we shew toward his Name*, Heb. vi. 10. Generosity is so infinitely perfect in God beyond what it is in Men, that there is really no Comparison; there is not the very least Service can be performed to *Christ*, not so much as the giving a Cup of cold Water to any that belongs to him, or upon his Account, that shall not meet with a due Re-
pence

XXII.] *Persecuted for Christ*, Mat. V. 12. 381
pence of Reward. Nor, *Lastly*, Is there any
Fear that he, to whom our Services are performed,
can ever fail by Death; for, as the Apostle
tells us, *He is able to save to the uttermost them that
come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make
Intercession for them*, Heb. vii. 25. So that it is
very plain, I think, that the Consideration of the
Person, on whose Account we suffer, is one great
Ground of the Reward, the ample Reward promised
to them who suffer for *Christ's* sake.

2. But, *Secondly*, If we consider the Act itself
of suffering for *Christ*, we may observe several
Things in it which will account for a particular
high Reward in Glory to such Sufferers, the Act
of suffering for *Christ* being the most noble and
heroick Act of *Christian* Virtue; and consequently
such Sufferers being the true *Christian* Heroes upon
Earth, and therefore entitled to a proportionable
high Degree of Glory in Heaven. For Proof
of which, I desire to offer briefly the following
Considerations:

1. This suffering for *Christ* is the highest Expression
of our Faith in him, and Faith, we know, is the
Root from which all other *Christian* Virtues proceed;
so that he who has a firm and unshaken Faith,
has all other Virtues in the Seed: He believes the
Gospel, and there is no doubt all other Virtues and
Graces will naturally flow from that Belief. Not but
that Suffering may proceed from Vain-glory and other
By-ends, but we speak here of those Sufferings
which are for *Christ's* sake, as my Text observes;
and of them it may be certainly affirmed, that they
are the genuine Fruits of a lively Faith. The Apostle
St. Paul observes the same of the ancient Martyrs and
Confessors

Confessors of the Old Testament, *Who were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection, that they all obtained a good Report through Faith*, Heb. xi. 39. For, if Faith be, as the Apostle there saith, *the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen*, certainly they who quit all, even Life itself, upon the Hope of unseen Blessings, must be strongly rooted and grounded in Faith.

2. The patient suffering of Persecution for *Christ*, is a Proof and Testimony of our greatest Love to him; our Saviour himself instances in this, as the highest Expression of Love a Man can have for his Friends, if he is willing to lay down his Life for them. *Greater Love hath no Man than this, saith he, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends*, John xv. 13. And if so, how can we express greater Love to *Christ*, than by suffering for him, even to Death?

3. Our Saviour observes, that it is an Instance of the greatest Patience and Self-denial; for after he had, in the 16th Chapter of *St. Matthew*, shewed his Disciples the Necessity of Self-denial; *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me*; he adds immediately, *For whosoever will save his Life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his Life for my sake, shall find it*, Mat. xvi. 24.

4. It is a Sign of the greatest Courage and Resolution, to look the greatest Dangers in the Face, and not to be scared by them from our Duty to *Christ*. What can be more brave and heroick than that Courage of *St. Paul's*? Acts xx. 23, 24. *The Holy Ghost, saith he, witnesseth in every City, saying, that Bonds and Afflictions abide me; but*

none

XXII.] *Persecuted for Christ*, Mat. V. 12. 383
*none of these Things move me, neither count I my
Life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my
Course with Joy. And Chap. xxi. 13. when his
Fellow-Christians hung about him, and with
Tears endeavour'd to dissuade him from his Jour-
ney to Jerusalem, foreseeing that Bonds and Af-
flictions would overtake him there; he answer'd
resolutely, What mean ye to weep, and to break my
Heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also
to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord
Jesus.*

5. If it be duly consider'd, it will be found to
be a Virtue, which, if true and genuine, includes
all other Virtues in it, and supposes them all.
For if there were any one Root of Bitterness
growing up in our Hearts, we could never suffer
so resolutely for *Christ*. For an Experiment, let
us briefly try the foregoing Beatitudes, and we
shall find how they all concur in the Composition
of this one Virtue, the patient suffering for *Christ*.

1. *First, Poverty in Spirit*, that is, a Disengage-
ment of Heart from the World, is absolutely ne-
cessary to this Virtue of suffering for *Christ*. For
if a Man is not ready to part with his Wealth for
Christ, how can he be ready to part with his Life
for him? For *Skin for Skin, and all that a Man
hath, will he give for his Life*, Job ii. 4. And,

2. He that is ready to suffer for *Christ*, must needs
be of a very serious Temper, and mortified to all
the Pleasures of the World and the Flesh; and
such are the *Mourners* describ'd in the second Bea-
titude: For *he that hath suffer'd in the Flesh*, saith
St. Peter, *hath ceased from Sin*, 1 Pet. iv. 1. 3.
He who is ready to suffer for *Christ*, hath mortifi-
fied all his irascible Passions, nothing being more
incon-

inconsistent than these two, the patient Suffering, and the angry Resentment and Revenge of Injuries: And therefore he must be *meek*, whoever suffers for *Christ*. 4. He that suffers for *Christ*, must be a great *Lover of Righteousness*, since he chuses the greatest Suffering, rather than to redeem it by Sin. 5. Such a one cannot but be *merciful*, both in giving, and in forgiving: Merciful in giving; he that is ready to sacrifice his Life in *Christ's* Service, will he not more readily sacrifice his Estate? And merciful in forgiving; for he that is ready to suffer for *Christ*, has subdued all Thoughts of Revenge. 6. Such Sufferers for *Christ* must be *pure in Heart*, whether by that be meant *Sincerity*, or *inward Chastity*, or both; for, as to Sincerity, what better Trial can we have of it, than that a Man stands the fiery Trial itself, and comes out like Gold purified and refined from all its Dross? Then as to inward Purity or Chastity, the crucifying of the Flesh is attended with the *crucifying of the Affections and Lusts*, Gal. v. 24. 7. And, *Lastly*, Such Sufferers for *Christ* must be peaceable, when no Injury can provoke them to Contention or Revenge, but they are ready to sacrifice their very Lives for their Duty: And if their Lives, sure, with less Difficulty, all more inferior Concerns. So that we see this Virtue of suffering for *Christ* includes all the Virtues recommended in the other seven Beatitudes in great Height and Perfection.

6. Let it be consider'd, that this patient undergoing of Sufferings for *Christ*, is one of the greatest Services that can be done to the *Christian* Religion; and for Proof of this, I offer the following Considerations:

(1.) It

(1.) It is the highest Attestation that can be given to any Truth, for the Witnesses of it to seal it with their Blood; so that the Doctrines of *Christianity*, especially those that depend on the Validity of Evidences, (such as are our Saviour's Resurrection and Ascension, and his other Miracles, on which the Truth of the Doctrines depends) come hereby to have the highest Evidence that any Matters of Fact are capable of. We believe a Witness firmly, when we observe that no Temptation whatsoever is able to bias him, or to make him in the least vary from the Stedfastness of his Testimony.

(2.) It is this Grace which furnishes the Church with abundance of the noblest Examples of a confirmed Virtue, such as is above all the Terrors of the World; and such living and dying Patterns of Virtue, are better fitted to make Impressions on Mankind, than all the best Precepts that can be dictated.

(3.) Confessors and Martyrs have always been found, by Experience, to be the great Awakeners of Mankind, to bring them to consider both the Truth and Importance of Religion. It excites a laudable Curiosity in many, to enquire after the Knowledge of that Religion for which Men are not afraid to suffer; and it disposes the World to believe they must be in good earnest, who are ready to die for it. It gives Men, likewise, a favourable Prepossession, as to those hidden Joys, and unseen Glories, which are so prevalent with Martyrs and Confessors. So that instead of deterring the more serious and thinking Part of Mankind from the suffering Religion, it has quite con-

trary Effects, both in confirming its Professors, and in making Converts.

(4.) This demonstrates to the World, that the *Christian* Religion was not propagated by carnal Weapons, but by the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit. If a Religion could make its Way without the Countenance of Laws and Authority, without Force or Fraud, merely by its own Reasonableness, joined with the holy Lives and patient Sufferings of its Professors, it is a great Presumption that such a Religion is of God, and not of Men. But,

7. And *Lastly*, To shew the absolute Necessity of this Virtue of suffering for *Christ*, to the *Christian* Religion, let it be consider'd, how impossible it is that *Christianity* could have subsisted, or have made its Way in the World without it. *Christianity* found the Pagan Idols every where in Possession, and this being the Case, it is not to be imagined how, without Confession and Martyrdom, *Christianity* could ever have got Possession in the World; for Idolatry could not have been thrown out without some Struggle, and it must be believ'd, that the idolatrous Princes would certainly make use of their Power to defend it, and to keep out the *Christian* Religion, which is so great an Enemy to the Lusts and Vices of Men. Supposing, then, Force and Persecution every where employed, as indeed they were, to defend Idolatry, and to keep out *Christianity*; and supposing there had been no such Duty as this of suffering for *Christ*; what must have been done? Either *Christians* must have rose up in Rebellion against their several Princes and Governors, and
I have

have defended themselves, and propagated their Religion by the Sword, or they must have quietly submitted to the Authority of the Rulers, and, whatever they had privately believed, must have publicly profess'd the Religion of the State. Now both those Ways *Christianity* must have been destroy'd. If *Christians* had gone into the Way of Force and Violence, then, instead of Meekness, Patience, Peaceableness, Obedience to Magistrates, and Respect to Government, Justice, and Love of Enemies, which are now the Life and Ornament of the *Christian* Profession; we must have had Anger, Revenge, Misrule, and Rebellion, Murders, Rapines, Conquest, and all the other direful Effects of the carnal Weapon set up. And then I ask, if this would have been the *Christian* Religion? For if we take away Humility, Meekness, Patience, Self-denial, Peaceableness, Obedience to Government, both active and passive, Love of Enemies, and the like; and if, instead thereof, we set up the Spirit of the World, Anger, Revenge, Murders, Rapines, Club-law, and Misrule, and call all this *Christianity*; this would be only to retain the Name, but to lose the Thing, and to make the *Christian* Religion a Cloak and Pretext for all manner of Wickedness. Again, if *Christians*, leaving the way of Force, had gone into the way of Complaisance, and had outwardly obeyed all the Edicts of Princes, had gone to the Idol Temples, joined in their false and idolatrous Worship, burnt their Bibles, outwardly blasphemed *Christ*, and renounced *Christianity*, contenting themselves with an inward Belief in their Hearts, or at best a secret Worship in their Chambers; then, instead of Truth and Sincerity, and

open Profession and Practice of *Christianity*, we should have had nothing but Hypocrisy, Dissimulation, open Idolatry, Lying, Equivocating, Perjury, Cowardice, and the Fear of Men preferred to the Fear of God. And could all this have been consistent with *Christianity*? There was no Middle Way left but this of the Cross, a Way, indeed, full of Difficulties, and unpleasant to Flesh and Blood, but brave, and honest, and honourable, and leading directly both to inward Peace, and to an ample Reward in Glory.

So much for the first Thing I proposed to consider at this Time, namely, why such an high Degree of Reward is promised to them that suffer for *Christ*. I should proceed next to the other Consideration in the Text, for our rejoicing, when we suffer for *Christ* or our Duty, namely, the Usage of the Prophets; *For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you*: As if he had said, “It is no new Thing that good Men, especially such as have been sent to reform the World, have met with such bad Treatment in it: Take the Prophets for an Example both of the Wickedness of the World, and of the Patience of the Saints.” But this Topick of Direction and Consolation I have not now Time to consider as it deserves, and shall therefore refer it to another Opportunity.

God bless what we have heard, and to him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXIII.

MAT. V. 12.

— *For so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before you.*

The Ninth Sermon on this Text.

OUR Saviour having, in the Beginning of this Verse, exhorted his Disciples to *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad*, whenever they should be put to suffer for him or their Duty; doth immediately back that Exhortation with two Arguments or Encouragements: One is, that their Reward for their patient Suffering should be great in Heaven; and the other, that the Prophets in their Days had met with the very same Usage.

Now having formerly spoke to the Exhortation, and likewise to the first of the Encouragements, the great Reward reserved for such Persons in Heaven; I proceed now to the second, taken from the Example of the Prophets, *For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* As if he had said, “Ye have all Reason to rejoice, “when ye come to suffer for well-doing; for as “this was the constant Lot of the Prophets, “those good Men who went before you in the “Office of reforming Mankind, and in prepa-
 C c 3 “ring

“ ring Men for the Kingdom of the *Messiah* ; so
 “ they have left you an Example of patient Suf-
 “ fering under all their Persecutions.”

In speaking to the Words, and for pursuing our Saviour’s Intention in them, I shall apply myself to these three or four Particulars:

I. To shew, in general, that it is Matter of Comfort and Joy to be found in the same way with good Men that have gone before us, and to meet with the same Treatment that they have met with from the World.

II. To clear up the Matter of Fact, by shewing how the Prophets were reviled, calumniated, and persecuted in their Days, for doing their Duty.

III. To consider the Parity of Reason between the Circumstances of the Prophets, and those of our Lord’s Disciples.

IV. To draw some Inferences with relation to our Duty, both from the good Examples of the Courage and Patience of the persecuted Prophets, and from the bad Examples of the persecuting World.

I. *First*, in general, That it is Matter of Comfort and Joy to be found in the same way with good Men that have gone before us, and to meet with the same Treatment that they met with from the World. This is the Foundation, as I apprehend it, upon which this Argument of our Saviour’s is built. As in travelling in an unknown way, it is both a great Comfort, and great Security, to have skilful Guides along with us, such as are universally acknowledged to be very expert in
 it;

it; so in the Conduct of our Lives through this wretched World, what greater Comfort can there be, than to have the Company of the Prophets and Apostles, who, by the general Consent of all, are the surest Guides in the way to Heaven?

Now to set this in a clearer Light, if it were not too great a Digression, it would be proper enough to consider upon what good Grounds this Comfort, from the Example of the Prophets, is built, *viz.* upon their being inspired by God as to their Doctrine, upon the bright Examples of their Lives, their patient Sufferings, and the Vindication of their Fame, after the Clouds of Persecution were over. I shall touch these Things but cursorily, because they were all Truths fully acknowledged by the *Jews*, our Saviour's Hearers; and therefore there is no Occasion to prove them, as would be necessary, if they had been controverted.

1. The Prophets were in high Esteem, as being extraordinary Persons raised up by God, who, by their heavenly Credentials, gave Authority to the Doctrine which they delivered; for they either wrought Miracles in Confirmation of their divine Mission, or they had the Attestation of some other undoubted Prophet, who had wrought Miracles; or, at least, by Purity of Doctrine, and Holiness of Life, and Agreement with other foregoing Prophecies, they established their Authority.

2. The great Zeal of the Prophets to reprove Vice, and to plant and establish Virtue with a very particular Courage and Freedom, is very conspicuous in all their Prophecies, and this, no doubt, gave them great Authority.

3. The same was established by their patient Sufferings; for both from my Text, and many other Passages of holy Scripture, it appears, that most of them were Martyrs.

4. Tho' they had been exceedingly calumniated and abused in their Life-time, yet by the Accomplishment of their Prophecies, after their Death, and the signal Judgments of God upon their Persecutors, their Fame came to be restor'd, and those Clouds of Suspicion and Calumny to be dissipated; so that in our Saviour's Days all Persons had a good Opinion of them, and a bad one of their Persecutors, not excepting the Scribes and Pharisees themselves, who honour'd their Tombs and Memories, tho' they follow'd the Actions of their Persecutors, as appears from our Saviour's Reprehension of them, *Mat. xxiii. 29. Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; because ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the Sepulchres of the Righteous, and say, if we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets.*

It is no wonder, then, if an extraordinary Commission from God, pure Doctrine, holy Lives, a zealous Reformation of Vice, patient Sufferings, and re-established clear Reputations, made all Men think it an Honour to be found in the same way with the Prophets.

II. But now, to go on with our Saviour's Argument, the Prophets, notwithstanding all these extraordinary Qualifications, were reviled, calumniated, and persecuted in their Days, for doing their Duty. I shall give you but a few Examples of this, out of a great many; for it is so
copious

copious a Subject, that one might transcribe a great part of the Lives of the Prophets, in Confirmation of it.

I begin with *Moses*, that eminent Prophet, who did so extraordinary Services for the People of *Israel*, in delivering them from the House of Bondage, and in settling them upon a good Foot of Laws and Government; yet how ungratefully was he treated, not only by the rebellious *Corah* and his Company, but by the whole Body of the People. The History is full of their Murmurings and Discontents, of their flying in the Face of *Moses* and *Aaron*, and of their longing for the Onions and Fleshpots of *Egypt*; nay, of their setting up the Gods of *Egypt*, to worship them. And the Rebellion of *Corah* shews how far the Prejudices against *Moses* were gone, there being no less than two hundred and fifty Princes of the Assembly, Men of Renown, and famous in the Congregation, engaged in that Conspiracy. And they carried their Accusations to a very great Height, as if he had cheated and misled the People, and was setting up for himself both in Church and State; as appears from the strange Remonstrance they made, when sent for by *Moses*, they refused to come. *Is it a small Thing*, say they, *that thou hast brought us up out of a Land that floweth with Milk and Honey, to kill us in the Wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a Prince over us? Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a Land that floweth with Milk and Honey, or given us Inheritance of Fields and Vineyards: Wilt thou put out the Eyes of these Men? We will not come up*, Numb. xvi. 13.

To go on as far as *Samuel*; we find, after a wise and good Government of the People for a great many Years, in his old Age they threw him off, and, by a general Combination, forced him to consent to a Change of Government. And not contented to have laid him aside from his civil Dignity, *Saul* likewise invaded his priestly Office, and took upon himself to offer Sacrifice, 1 *Sam.* xiii. 9. In this King's Days too it was, that upon a very small Pretence of a Crime he caused eighty-five Priests to be put to Death, and their whole City, Men, Women, Children, and Cattle, to be put to the Sword, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 18.

Elijah complain'd, in his Days, of the People of *Israel*, that they had forsaken God's Covenant, thrown down his Altars, and slain his Prophets with the Sword; and that he was the only one that was left, and that they sought his Life too, to take it away, 1 *Kings* xix. 10. And it was very true; for both *Abab* and *Jezebel*, the King and Queen, were hunting for his Life. Good *Obadiab* told him, that there was no Nation or Kingdom to which the King had not sent to seek him, 1 *Kings* xviii. 10. And *Jezebel* sent him a threatening Message, that she would have his Life by To-morrow at that Time, 1 *Kings* xix. 2.

Asa imprison'd the Prophet *Hanani*, for a wholesome Reproof he gave him, because of his trusting to Men more than to God, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 10.

Joash stoned the Prophet *Zachariah*, only for giving good Counsel against Idolatry.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* was cast into the Dungeon.

The Prophet *Isaiah* was sawn asunder.

The Prophet *Daniel* was thrown into the Lion's Den. And *Shadrach*, *Mesbach*, and *Abednego*, into a burning fiery Furnace.

The *Maccabees* were put to cruel Tortures.

And a little while after this Discourse, *John the Baptist*, the last of the Prophets, was beheaded by *Herod*. So that it was no new Thing to hear of the Persecution of the best of Men.

But it is not enough to have shew'd the Matter of Fact, that the Prophets in their Days were persecuted, unless we shew likewise upon what Account those Persecutions were brought upon them ; for that is necessary to the making out of our Saviour's Argument, that *so persecuted they the Prophets, which were before them*. Had the Prophets been idle, pragmatical Men, striking in with discontented Parties in the State, sowing Discord and Divisions ; or had they been covetous, worldly Men, involved in a great deal of Business with others, creating to themselves Enemies on that Account ; or had they been immoral Men, exposing themselves to the Lash of the Law by their evil Deeds ; it had not been much to be wonder'd at, if they had provoked Governments, or had created to themselves a Multitude of private Enemies. But never were any Men further from the least Suspicion of any of these Things. As to the civil Government, they commonly paid a great deal of Respect to it, and never refused their active Obedience, except some Edict came that touch'd them in point of Conscience, and requir'd their idolatrous or some other sinful Compliance. Even during the Captivity, they were for seeking the Peace of the City,

City, to the which the Lord had caused them to be carried away Captives, and for praying to him for it, as knowing that in the Peace thereof they should have Peace, *Jer. xxix. 7.* And as to their worldly Concerns and Dealings, we have Reason to think they were very small; for we never hear of any Law-Suits, or Controversies, or Quarrels about worldly Affairs they had with any Man, as the Prophet *Jeremiah* says, Chap. xv. 10. *Wo is me, my Mother, that thou hast born me a Man of Strife, and a Man of Contention to the whole Earth: I have neither lent on Usury, nor have Men lent to me on Usury, yet every one of them doth curse me.* And as for Immoralities, we do not find they were accus'd of them, so much as by their Enemies. So far from it, that they were the greatest Terror to Vice, and vicious Persons, in their Days. Even their vicious Princes dreaded the Sight of a Prophet, if they were about any, tho' ever so cleanly convey'd, Piece of Wickedness. An Example of which we have in *Ahab*, when surprized by *Elijah*, as he was taking Possession of *Naboth's Vineyard*; *Hast thou found me, O mine Enemy?* says he. And he answer'd, *I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work Evil in the Sight of the Lord,* 1 Kings xxi. 20. But what was it, then, if neither Sedition, nor Meddling in the World, nor Immoralities, brought on those Storms of Persecutions? What was it that did it? Something there must be that made their Crimes to be near of kin with those of the *Christians*, that should make our Saviour compare their Sufferings together.

If we enquire into the Crimes of the Prophets, we shall find they were commonly either the op-
posing

posing of Idolatry, or the bold reproving of Vice and Immorality, or the denouncing of God's Judgments to the Impenitent, or the calling for and pressing a publick Reformation of Manners, or the opposing of false Prophets, all very dangerous Employments; in which we shall find they were succeeded by the *Christians*, both in their pretended Crimes and Sufferings. But this, perhaps, will come better in under

III. The *Third* Head of Discourse I proposed from the Words, which was, to consider the Parity of Reason between the Circumstances of the Prophets, and those of our Lord's Disciples. In which there are these three Things to be consider'd:

1. That the Prophets had to do with the same perverse People as the *Christians* had to treat with.

2. That the Business and Office of the Prophets was much the same with that of the *Christians*.

3. That the Obstacles, the Prophets met with, were the very same with those of the *Christians*. And therefore it was but reasonable to conclude their Treatment would be much the same.

1. I say, the Prophets had to do with the same perverse People as the *Christians* had to treat with. They were their Forefathers who persecuted the Prophets. St. *Luke* expresses my Text thus, Luke vi. 23. *For in like manner did their Fathers unto the Prophets.* And elsewhere our Saviour reckons it one and the same Spirit of Persecution which acted in their Fathers and in them; and he calls them, *The Children of them which killed the Prophets*, Mat. xxiii. 31. and abandons them, as it were,

were, to fill up the Measure of their Fathers. He foretels, that they should misuse the Prophets, and wise Men and Scribes, by killing, crucifying, scourging, and persecuting them; and for that Reason, he brings them in not only as guilty of the Blood immediately shed by themselves, but likewise as accessory to all that which had been shed by their Fathers, as by their Spirit and Actions approving it; and therefore accountable for the whole: *That upon you, says he, may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar*, ver. 35. In short, then, it was the same bloody People, the same persecuting *Jerusalem*, which kill'd the Prophets, and ston'd them that were sent to them, which both the ancient Prophets, and our Saviour and his Disciples, had to do with.

2. Another Thing in which the Parity consisted, was, in the Commission and Employment of the Prophets, which was the very same with that of *Christ's* Disciples. The Prophets had an immediate Commission and Uction from God, to go and reform that sinful People, and to prepare them for the Reception of the *Messiah*. *Christ's* Disciples had the like Uction and Commission to prepare People, by Repentance and Amendment of Life, to believe in the *Messiah* already come. The old Prophets had many a Rencounter with Idolatry and false Prophets among the *Jews*. *Christians* had Idolatry to rencounter all the World over, together with the Scribes and Pharisees among the *Jews*, and the idolatrous Priests among the *Gentiles*. The old Prophets
boldly

boldly reprov'd Vice in all Ranks of Men, from the highest to the lowest. And so our Saviour's Disciples were brought before Magistrates and Kings for his sake, and with wonderful Freedom and Boldness told them their Duty. The old Prophets denounced God's Judgments against an impenitent People in their Days, and so did our Saviour and his Disciples denounce God's heavy Judgments, more particularly in the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which proved so incorrigible by all the Calls and Methods of the Gospel.

3. A *Third* Thing in which the Parity consisted between the Circumstances of the Prophets and that of our Saviour's Disciples, was, that the one and the other had the same Difficulties and Obstructions to struggle with; namely, the Men in Power, both in Church and State, who were possessed with a Spirit of Pride and Covetousness, Ease and Luxury, which was an utter Enemy to all Reformation, and to all Thoughts and Notions of a spiritual Kingdom. This was not only a worldly, but a bloody Spirit, employing the utmost carnal Force to withstand the Truth. They had both of them to do with the most inveterate Prejudices and Prepossessions of Education, Temper, and worldly Interest, against the Truth, back'd with Force, Power, and Authority; and they were both of them destitute of any other Means to promote the Truth, except the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit. The Weapons of their Warfare were not carnal, but mighty, through God, for the pulling down of strong Holds: So that it might well be expected the same Attempts upon the same sort of People would have the same Effects; namely, to raise
a great

a great Storm of Persecution against the Reformers.

IV. I come now, in the last Place, to draw some Inferences, with relation to Practice, both from the good Examples of the Prophets, and from the bad Examples of the unthankful persecuting World.

First, From the Examples of the Prophets, there are these three Lessons we may learn ; I shall do little more than just mention them, leaving the Improvement of them to your further Meditations.

1. From their Example, let us learn an Honesty, Courage, and Stedfastness, in doing our Duty, notwithstanding the many Arts the World uses to discourage us in it. It was a very comfortless Thing to have the Frowns and Hatred of the Princes and great Men in their Days ; to be Brow-beaten and run down by Parasites and false Prophets ; to have the Curses of the People for the Severity of their Life and Doctrine ; nay, to be imprison'd, arraign'd, condemn'd, and punish'd, as if they had been the greatest Malefactors : And yet these brave Men were not discourag'd from doing their Duty, leaving the Success to God. Let us go, and do likewise. It is really a most shameful Thing to see how Bribes and Flattery, on the one hand, and Threats and Discouragements, on the other, do commonly change Men's Principles and Opinions, at least their Practice and Profession ; and, instead of the honest, make them act the knavish, Time-serving Part. The Prophets were Men of Probity and Courage, and knew not what it was to sooth People in their Sins, but would tell them their Duty, whether they

they would hear, or whether they would forbear, be the Hazard what it would.

2. The Patience of the Prophets under the Cross, is an Example well worthy of our Imitation: *Take, my Brethren, the Prophets, who have spoken in the Name of the Lord*, says St. James, *for an Example of suffering Affliction, and of Patience*, Jam. v. 10. As they would not betray a good Cause, so neither could they be provoked by ill Usage to Tumults, Sedition, and Rebellion; but with Meekness committed themselves to him who judgeth righteously.

3. There is a *Third* Thing we may observe for our Comfort from the Example of the Prophets, which is, that tho' they were persecuted in their own Time, yet all Men became quickly sensible of the unjust ill Usage they had, and therefore blessed and honoured their Memories. For such is the Nature of Virtue, that tho' it may be under a Cloud from Malice and Envy, and Men's Incorrigibleness in their evil Courses; yet it is a most lovely Thing in itself, and gains Ground in point of Reputation, with Posterity, tho' they are not so apt to imitate, as to honour and commend it. So the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's Days, even while they were possessed with a most persecuting Spirit themselves, yet built the Tombs of the Prophets, and condemned the Persecutions of their Forefathers. Let this be some Encouragement to us in well-doing, that howsoever we may happen to be misrepresented, and under a Cloud, nay, persecuted for the Time, we shall smell sweet to Posterity, and shall embalm our Reputations beyond any Thing that wicked

Men can do, to preserve their Memories from stinking and rotting in the World.

I shall conclude, after I have recommended a Caution from the bad Example of the People of *Israel* in my Text. What is it our Saviour here reprehends? It is a persecuting Spirit in general, and a Disrespect to the Prophets and their Message in particular. If we would then learn Instruction from bad Examples, let us learn to avoid a Spirit of Persecution, and to treat our Adversaries with Gentleness and Meekness. Particularly, as to all God's Messengers, let us learn to respect them for their Works sake, and to strengthen their Hearts and Hands in doing Good, remembering what our Saviour said for the Comfort of the Ministers of the Gospel, *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*, Mat. x. 40. Alas! how many People are there in the World, who have so little Respect for the Gospel, that they are ready to give the same Reception to the Ministers of it, as the *Gergesenes* gave to *Christ* himself, that is, *to pray them to depart out of their Coasts*?

Thus now I have at last finished, through God's Assistance, my Explication of the Beatitudes, which were some of the first Lessons our Saviour gave to his Disciples. I have no Time to make any general Observations from the whole; only, in a word, this I believe can't escape every one's Notice, that, in order to our being good *Christians*, it is absolutely necessary that we be Men of good Morals, and that vicious Persons, till they are changed and renewed, shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; that is, are neither fit to be Members of the *Christian Church* here, nor to be admitted to
Heaven

XXIII.] *the Prophets*, Mat. V. 12. 403

Heaven hereafter. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour, and Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XXIV.

M A T. V. 13.

Ye are the Salt of the Earth: But if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under Foot of Men.

Ver. 14. Ye are the Light of the World. A City that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.

Ver. 15. Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel: But on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.

Ver. 16. Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

The First Sermon on this Text.

BEFORE we enter on the Explication of this Part of our Saviour's Discourse, it may not be improper to consider briefly the Connexion of it with what went before, and with what follows, in the same Sermon. In the former Part of the Sermon our Lord had corrected a great many false carnal Notions his Hearers had of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and the wrong Dispositions of Mind which naturally followed upon those carnal Notions; instilling into them, at the same Time, such Vir-

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tues,

tues, as might put them in the best Preparation for his spiritual Kingdom. Now to excite them to a Diligence in these same Virtues, and to teach them that it was an eminent high Degree of Proficiency in them, which he expected at their Hands, he acquaints them here, that all *Christians*, and they his first Disciples especially, were the Persons by whose Means he proposed to himself to reform the rest of the World; and therefore that they must be very exemplary and exact in the Practice of all *Christian* Virtues themselves. For which Reason, likewise, he thought it necessary to give them very exact Instructions, and not only to guard them against the gross carnal Notions of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, which led them in a way quite contrary to that of their Duty; but, likewise, against the imperfect Glosses the *Jewish* Doctors had given of the Law, which tended to the making them sit down contented with a very slight and superficial Performance of it: Now what could be more proper, either to excite them to a Diligence in those excellent Virtues he had taught in the foregoing Beatitudes, or to a greater Perfection in all the Duties of the Law, which he was now about to vindicate from the imperfect Interpretations of the *Jewish* Doctors; than to acquaint them with the high Honour he designed them, to be the great Reformers of Mankind; for which Reason, the Eyes of all Men, he told them, would be set upon them, their Vices could not be concealed, and very eminent Degrees of Virtue would be expected of them who were to be the Masters and Patterns of Virtue to others? So much for the Connexion.

In the Words we have these two Things:

I. The honourable Employment *Christ* designed for his Disciples, namely, that they should be the great Reformers of Mankind. This is expressed under two noble Similitudes, one taken from the most spirituous, active Part of the Earth, *the Salt of the Earth*; the other from the most glorious of the heavenly Bodies, the Sun, *the Light of the World*. The one to make Mankind savoury, and to preserve them from Corruption; the other to direct them in the Way wherein they were to walk.

II. We have some Consequences drawn from each of these Similitudes, with relation to the main Design for which our Saviour brought them.

I intend to consider the Similitudes apart, together with the Consequences our Saviour draws from them, in the same Order as the Words lie in the Text.

But before I begin the Explication of the Similitudes, there is one previous Question, common to them both, must be enquired into, namely, Who are the Persons addressed to by this Word *Ye*? *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*; and *Ye are the Light of the World*. As to this, (notwithstanding the contrary Opinions of the greater Number of Commentators,) I can see no Reason to believe they are any other than those who are addressed to, both in the preceding and subsequent Parts of this Sermon: And those, in my second and third Discourses upon it, I proved, by many Arguments, to be all our Saviour's Disciples, not *the Twelve* only; and, consequently, that the Doctrine of this Sermon belongs to all
Christians,

Christians, and is neither to be limited to *the Twelve*, in their extraordinary apostolick Capacity; nor to the Clergy in their pastoral Capacity; tho', no doubt, as they are to be *Examples of the Believers*, whatever *Christian Virtues* or Endowments are required of all *Christians*, are in an higher Measure and Degree required of the Pastors and Guides of the Church. But there is a great Number of Expositors will needs limit these Expressions, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, and *Ye are the Light of the World*, to the twelve Apostles; as if our Saviour had here made some particular Address to them; for which I can see no Countenance from the Words, it being the same Auditory to which the whole Discourse is addressed: Nor any the least Incongruity in addressing this to all *Christians*, but far otherwise. For what could be more reasonable, than that our Saviour should first make Men good *Christians*, before he taught them the Duties of Apostles or Pastors? But having argued this Matter at large in that second and third Discourse on this Sermon on the Mount, I shall not now repeat what was there said: But since the Words now before us seem to be the only Part of the whole Sermon that sound this Way, and so may have led Expositors to that incongruous and ungrammatical Sense, which may likewise have terrible Consequences, for by the same License they may interpret away whatever other Parts of the Sermon they please from private *Christians*, a Thing which by all Means ought to be prevented, this being the very fullest Collection of *Christian Duties* we have in all the Gospels: I shall therefore now endeavour to shew, that there is nothing contained

in these two Expressions, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, and *Ye are the Light of the World*, but what both by Scripture and Reason is very applicable to all *Christians*. And for this I offer the following Considerations:

1. It will be easily granted, that they are the same Persons to whom these two Expressions are addressed, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, and *Ye are the Light of the World*; and therefore if we can prove that any one of them is to be understood of *Christians* in general, we are to suppose the same of the other also. I shall therefore first prove it; as to their being *Lights of the World*; for the Proof of that being more plain, will make way for the other which is more obscure. I shall not insist on those many Passages in which the Heathen State is compared to *Darkness*, and *Christianity* to *Light*, because these, perhaps, may be thought to relate only to the Illumination of our own Minds, and not to come up to this higher Expression of being *the Light of the World*. But there is one Text, *Phil. ii. 15.* which doth fully reach it, and is meant altogether of private *Christians*. *Do all Things*, says the Apostle, writing to the *Philippians*, *without Murmurings and Disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World.* Solomon had before made the same Comparison of the Examples of good Men, *Prov. iv. 18.* where he says, *The Path of the Just is as the shining Light, which shines more and more unto the perfect Day*; and that our Saviour meant it here of all *Christians*, I am further induced to believe, from the Consequence he
draws

draws from this Character, which is only that they should, by the bright Examples of their Life and Conversation, shew the rest of the World what manner of Persons they ought to be.

A City set on an Hill cannot be hid; neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel: But on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House. And what sort of Light he means, is plain, from the Words immediately following; that it is the Light of good Example, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven:* A Duty certainly incumbent on all *Christians*.

2. To come next to the other more obscure Similitude of *the Salt of the Earth*. Whether we consider the Use of this Expression in other Passages of the *New Testament*, or the Signification and Importance of the natural Use of *Salt*, which is to season or make a Thing savoury, and likewise to preserve it from Corruption, (which are the only Ways I can think of to find out the true Meaning of it;) we shall find nothing in it, but what is very applicable to *Christians* in general. To begin with the Scripture, *Mark ix.* at the two last Verses; *For every one shall be salted with Fire, and every Sacrifice shall be salted with Salt. Salt is good: But if the Salt have lost his Saltness, wherewith will you season it? Have Salt in your selves, and have Peace one with another.* All which Passage, I confess, is very difficult; but so much may be observed from it for our Purpose, *First*, That there is nothing there, or in the Context, said of the apostolical or pastoral Office, but the Duty of *Self-denial*, which went before,

is a common Duty of all *Christians*. Then the Word *EVERY ONE* imports Universality, and the Duty of *Peace one with another*, with which it is joined, is a common Duty. There is another Text where Salt is used to signify Wisdom, Col. iv. 6. *Let your Speech be alway with Grace, seasoned with Salt, that ye may know how to answer every Man.* And it is plain that that Advice, in which it is there used, is directed to the *Colossians*, who were private *Christians*; not to Pastors and Teachers only.

If from the Texts of Scripture, in which it is used, we pass to the Thing signified by this Comparison of *Salt*, we shall find the Expression doth very well suit private *Christians*; for by it one or both of these Things is meant, either that they were to bring in a Savouriness or good Relish into the insipid Lives and Conversations of Men; or that they were to be the Instruments of preserving Men from Corruption. Now both these, tho' eminently the Office of Pastors, belong to the Duty of private *Christians*; for as to the first Use of Salt, which is to make Things savoury, this is no more than that our Conversation should be fitted to make Men wise and good, and to take them off from that vain, useless, unprofitable, unedifying, and insipid Way in which they then walked. The recovering the World from their Errors and Follies, and the tincturing the Minds of Men with better Notions and Principles, is this *Seasoning*; as the contrary to it, the corrupting Men with bad Notions and Principles, is called *the Leavening or Souring* of them. Now that the *Seasoning* of the World, in this Sense, is a Duty incumbent upon all *Christians*, may appear
from

from the many Exhortations to instruct, exhort, and admonish one another; *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin*, Heb. iii. 13. *Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do*, 1 Thess. v. 11. *Let us consider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to good Works*, Heb. x. 24. Then as to the being instrumental to preserve the World from Corruption, tho' it is eminently the Work of Pastors, it is mightily commended in all *Christians*, Jam. v. 19. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins*. So that there is no manner of Occasion to limit these Expressions, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*, and *Ye are the Light of the World*, to Apostles or Pastors. And therefore the *Ye* I take to be the same common Disciples, or private *Christians*, to whom all the rest of the Sermon is addressed.

This Point being fixed, let us next enquire how *Christians* are *the Salt of the Earth*. These Characters which our Saviour gives his Disciples in this Place, are to be understood by way of Commendation, but such Commendation as conveys a very important Admonition and Instruction; and such Commendations are usual in all Authors, and likewise in our ordinary Discourse. The chief Design of them here seems to be, to stir up *Christians*, not to content themselves to live like other Men, but that they endeavour to be eminent and exemplary themselves in all Virtue, and eminently active in recovering the World
out

out of that State of Darknes and Corruption in which they were involved. So much for these Characters in general.

But now to come to this first, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*; there is something of a Nobleness and Greatness of Character our Saviour would here impress upon his Disciples, and likewise something of Duty he would teach them: I shall endeavour briefly to find out both, without putting any Constraint upon the Words, or detorting them to any Similitude or Resemblance, more than I judge is intended by them.

To begin with the Greatness or Nobleness of Character our Saviour would have his Disciples to entertain of themselves, by this Expression, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*: He seems to me to compare *Christians* with the rest of the World amongst whom they live, and to prefer them far before others. As the Salt or Spirit which Chymists extract out of Herbs and Flowers, is much stronger, and hath much more of Virtue and Efficacy in it, than the Herb or Flower itself, and especially much more than the insipid dead Matter, the *Caput mortuum*, as the Chymists call it, which is left behind after the Salt or Spirit is extracted; so *Christians* are not to look upon themselves as common Men of the World, but as the Spirit and Salt of the World, which gives it Life and Relish.

And, answerable to this Character, there is a suitable Duty enjoined, *viz.* 1. That *Christians* should be very savoury themselves; and, 2. That they should, by their Admonitions, and Example, endeavour to make others so too, and to preserve them from Corruption.

1. *Christians*

1. *Christians* should be very savoury themselves, that is, they should have their Minds well replenished with good Notions and Principles, I mean useful and edifying Principles, such as are apt to diffuse the good Savour of Virtue, and to guard Men against the Corruptions of Vice: And of this it is I understand that Scripture, *Mark ix. Have Salt in yourselves*, that is, be well stocked with such good Notions, and such a lively Sense of divine Truths, as may both preserve yourselves and others from Corruption, and give a sweet Savour and Relish to your Conversation. But, in order to this, it is requisite that those good Notions be not only in our *Heads*, but in our *Hearts*; that we have a lively Sense of them, and that our Affections be thoroughly seasoned with them.

2. It is necessary that *Christians*, by their good Admonitions and Example, use their best Endeavours to season the rest of the World, and to preserve them from Corruption. *First*, The Communication of these sound Notions in Speech, is called the Speech's being seasoned with Salt. *Col. iv. 6. Let your Speech be alway with Grace, seasoned with Salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every Man.* In which Words there seem to be two very material Things pointed at, with relation to this Communication of good Notions by Speech; namely, that there be a Communicativeness for the Good of others, and likewise a due Discretion and Consideration to observe the Circumstances of those others, that we may apply ourselves to every Man suitably to his Temper, Capacity, and Condition. As all Meat will not bear Seasoning to the same Height, nor will take Salt at all Times alike; so neither are our
good

good Notions to be crammed down equally at all Times, and to all Persons, nor to the same Degree, and in all Circumstances.

So much for the Explication of this Character of *Christians*, *Ye are the Salt of the Earth*: I perceive Time will not allow our Consideration of the Inference our Saviour draws from it, concerning the Necessity of preserving ourselves in a Condition to season others with good Principles, by keeping up a lively Sense of these Things upon our own Spirits. And therefore I shall dismiss it at present, after I have suggested a few practical Observations, naturally rising from this Notion, which will likewise cast some further Light on the Explication of it.

1. *First*, then, From this Character given by our Saviour of *Christians*, we may observe what a distinguishing Mark of Honour he puts upon them: They are the Persons who make Mankind savoury, and preserve them from Corruption. Setting aside *Christianity*, and the Principles of another Life, and the excellent Rules of holy Living it suggests, this World would be nothing but a putrified stinking Place, where all are rotting away with their own inward Corruption; but the Principles of our holy Religion, and those excellent Rules of Life which it teaches us, when thoroughly imbibed, are like good Salt which pierces into the Meat, and, incorporating with the otherwise unsavoury Juices of it, both gives it a Piquancy and good Relish, and preserves it from Maggots and Putrefaction. What a certain *Heathen* Author (a) said of *Greece*, when it abounded with learned and wise Men, that they
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(a) Livy.

were the Salt of the Nations, *Græcia Sal gentium*; may much more truly be said of *Christians*, that for true Wisdom, and right Principles, to season Men's Minds, and to preserve them from Corruption, they are the Salt of the Earth. But we are still to remember, it is not these nominal *Christians*, *Christians* by Name, and *Heathens* in Life and Conversation, who are the Salt of the Earth; but real *Christians*, such as the primitive *Christians* were, who firmly believed, and practised, and zealously propagated the Principles of *Christianity*. What a Reformation did they make in the World? How sweetly did they season the Hearts and Lives of Mankind, and preserve them from that Corruption with which they had been over-run before? Hear what St. *Paul* says, writing to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. *Be not deceived*, says he, *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you: But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. And every where in the holy Scriptures the World is represented without Christ to be dead in Trespasses and Sins, to be quite corrupted and rotten, but to be recovered and renewed by Christ. For in this the Christian Doctrine, and the Grace of God attending it, do not only answer, but even exceed this Character of Salt; that whereas Salt can only preserve Things from Corruption, but can't recover and make them sound again after they are corrupted; this the Doctrine of the Gospel can*
do;

do; it can both preserve the sound, and recover the rotten and putrified Part of Mankind.

2. From this Character of *Christians*, that they *are the Salt of the Earth*, we may observe what an insipid Thing the World is, till it comes to be seasoned with sound Principles of Religion; whether we compare it to the *Caput mortuum* of the Chymists, the dead earthy Matter of Flowers and Plants, after the Salt and Spirit are extracted, or to fresh insipid Meat, which wants Salt both to give it a good Relish, and to preserve it from Corruption; every way it is an insipid, tasteless Thing. O what an unfavoury Thing would this World be, if it were not for the Principles and Hopes of a better Life! how vain and empty all our worldly Projects, if they had no Relation to a future State!

3. This Character of *Salt* given by our Saviour to true *Christians*, in respect of the rest of the World, should put us in Mind of our Duty, which is to sanctify and sweeten others, to give them a right Relish, and to preserve them from the Corruption of loose Principles, and bad Company, to which the natural Depravedness of their Temper, and the Corruption of the World, doth too much expose them. In order to this, we should, in the first Place, possess our own Minds with the clear Knowledge, and firm Belief, and lively Sense of those divine Truths which are most proper to sanctify Mankind, and to preserve them from Corruption. Then we should carefully spread and disseminate those Truths as we have Opportunity; Parents should begin very early to season the tender Hearts and Minds of their Children with right Notions and Principles; Teachers

Teachers should do the same with their Scholars, Pastors with their Flocks, Masters and Mistresses with their Servants; the Elder, and the more advanced in Age and Understanding, with those that are younger and more ignorant; and, indeed, much greater Care ought to be taken by all of us, by a due Administration of Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof, and especially by good Example, to endeavour to preserve one another from Corruption, and to season one another's Minds with Principles of true Piety and Virtue. Let no Man fear, that by so doing he shall encroach upon the Pastor's Office. All *Christians* are required to *exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day*, Heb. iii. 13. We reckon it a Kindness to serve our Neighbour in lesser Things; no Man reckons it an Injury to put up a Stake or a Rail in his Neighbour's Fence when it is blowed down, or at least to acquaint his Neighbour, as soon as he can, that there is a Gap in his Fence, or that the Horses and Cattle are got into his Corn, or that his Cow is in the Mire: Is not a Man better than a Cow, or an Horse, or a Corn-Field? Shall we not much more lend an Hand to save a Soul, and to *cover a Multitude of Sins*?

4. *Lastly*, If it is the Duty of *Christians*, by Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof, to use their best Endeavours to season one another's Minds with good Principles; then let us learn to take this Duty well at one another's Hands, and, as the Apostle calls it, *Heb. xiii. to suffer the Word of Exhortation*. There are two great Obstructors of this excellent Duty, one is, the Imprudence and Unskilfulness of him who administers this Salt of Instruction and Reproof, and the other

the Pride and Impatience of them to whom it is administered; both which we should carefully labour to avoid.

Now God give us all Grace so to give and take spiritual Counsel and Advice, as that we may have our Hearts thoroughly seasoned with good Notions, and sound Principles, and may be preserved from the Corruption of all loose, Atheistical, and profane Opinions and Practices; to his Glory, and our own eternal Happiness and Comfort, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XXV.

MAT. V. 13.

——— *But if the Salt have lost his Savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be troden under Foot of Men.*

The Second Sermon on this Text.

HAVING at the last Occasion shewed you that these Similitudes of *the Salt of the Earth*, and *the Light of the World*, belong to all *Christians*; and that by the first of them, in which *Christians* are compar'd to *the Salt of the Earth*, is meant their being instrumental in guarding the World against the Corruption of Sin and Vice, and the seasoning them with the Principles of Wisdom and Virtue: I go on now to consider an Inference or Corollary our Saviour draws here from this Doctrine, concerning the Necessity of preserving ourselves in a Condition to season others with good Principles, by keeping up a lively Sense of divine Truths upon our own Spirits. For understanding this Inference, there are these two Things we may observe from the Words:

I. We have here a Supposition, that *the Salt may lose its Savour*; that is, that *Christians* may become so insipid and unedifying themselves, that they will not be in a Condition to preserve others from the Corruption of Vice, or to bring them to the Savouriness of Virtue.

II. We have the fatal Consequence of this Unfavouriness to *Christians* themselves, as well as to the rest of the World. *It is thenceforth good for nothing, &c.*

I. To begin with the Supposition, that *the Salt may lose its Savour*, or that *Christians* may grow so insipid and unedifying, as not to be distinguished from the rest of the World. And here now I think we are not to look upon this as a bare possible Supposition; our Saviour did not use to spend his Time, and employ his Doctrine, as several of the idle Schoolmen and Scholars of the World have done, in considering bare Possibilities: He had a Meaning, and, I doubt, a very sad one, in this Supposal. Interpreters, indeed, have taken little Notice of it, but such a solemn, grave, serious Threatning, obliges us to a more particular Enquiry into the Purport of it, that so we may the better guard ourselves against this dismal State of becoming *good for nothing, but to be despised and trod under Foot by Men.*

There are two Things seem to me to be here insinuated, if not foretold by our Saviour, which may both of them deserve our more serious Consideration.

I. That

1. That private *Christians* may, by their Negligence, and Abuse of their Talents, come to lose all right Sense of Religion and Virtue.

2. That the *Christian Church* in general should in Time be exceedingly corrupted, that that wonderful Virtue it had to awaken and reform the World, should come to be lost, and *Christianity* thereby become very contemptible.

1. *First*, It is a sad Prediction how private *Christians*, by their Negligence, and Abuse of their Talents, may come to lose all right Sense of Religion and Virtue. I know not how it has come to be disputed, whether Men could fall away from Grace; but I doubt there are not many Things that either Experience or Scripture are plainer in, than in this sad Truth. How many are there, who, after all the Care of a religious and pious Education, and after very hopeful Beginnings, have, through the Prevalency of their own Lusts, and the seducing of bad Company, lost all sound Sense of Religion, and by Degrees have gone into the Principles of Atheism and Infidelity; so that they could neither preserve themselves nor others from the common Corruption and Pollution of the World? And have we not Instances of this very Thing in the holy Scriptures, of some, who, *laying aside a good Conscience, concerning the Faith, have made Shipwrack?* 1 Tim. i. 19.

2. I take it to be a sad Prediction, likewise, of the Degeneracy of the *Christian Church*, how that after all that wonderful Virtue and Efficacy it exerted at first in reforming and sanctifying Mankind, it should come at last to degenerate into the worldly Spirit; to lose its Force and Ef-

ficacy, and to be, indeed, like *Salt that had lost its Savour*. So St. Paul describes some *Christians* of the last Days, that they should have a *Form of Godliness, denying the Power thereof*, 2 Tim. iii. 5. and, in another Place, that tho' they *profess to know God, in Works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good Work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16. What is render'd there *reprobate*, is indeed ἀδόκιμοι, *unexpert*, they have no Dexterity or Skill that Way; like bad Salt, which tho' it may have the Colour, has lost the true Taste and Virtue of Salt.

So much for the Supposition in my Text.

II. I proceed next to the fatal Consequence of this Unfavouriness; this is pursued in these two Instances:

1. That there is no Cure for those bad *Christians; Wherewith shall it be seasoned?*

2. That they are then of no manner of Use, but deservedly expose themselves to the utmost Contempt. *It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and troden under Foot of Men.*

1. The *first* Part of the Consequence of the Salt losing its Savour is, that there is no Cure for this, that is, as I take it, there is no farther Dispensation of greater Efficacy than *Christianity*, whereby a corrupt *Christian* can be recovered from his Errors and Follies, and seasoned with the Principles of Religion and Virtue. And therefore those whom *Christianity* can't reclaim, are left in a desperate, helpless Condition. There is no further Sacrifice for Sin, there is no further Discovery to be expected of a future State, *Christ* having brought Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel; if neither *Moses* and the Prophets,
nor

nor *Christ* and the Apostles, if neither the plain and comprehensive *Duties*, nor the powerful *Miracles*, nor the precious *Promises*, nor the dreadful *Threatnings* of *Christianity*, will work upon us; there remains nothing but a fearful Expectation of Judgment, and of fiery Indignation, which shall be revealed to such Adversaries of the Truth.

2. A *second* Part of the Inference our Saviour draws, is this, that those *Christians* who are grown thus insipid, and have lost all true Savour of Goodness themselves, and all Virtue and Efficacy to reform others, are of no manner of Use, and do deservedly expose themselves to the utmost Contempt; and that the *Christian Church* in general, if she should come to lose her primitive Spirit of reforming and sanctifying Mankind, should become very useless, and very contemptible to what she was before.

(1.) To begin with the private *Christian*; What is he but a dead Carcass, if he has lost all Sense and Savour of Goodness? If his Religion has lost its Efficacy, and serves neither to sanctify his own Heart, nor to reform his Life, nor the Lives of other Men? Such a *Christian* is really good for nothing; his Shew and Profession of Religion serves only to make him more effectually put the Cheat upon himself. For it is a Religion that will neither stand the Test in this World, nor in the World to come. It is an easy Matter to tell a great deal of Hurt such an unfavoury Religion doth both to him that hath it, by cheating him in his greatest Interest; and to others, by leading them in the broad Way to Perdition, and how dishonourable it is to the

blessed Author of *Christianity*, by making the World believe that he was the Institutor of such an uselefs sort of Men as these bare nominal *Christians* are. But there is no manner of Good can be said of it, no good Use it can be put to; at present it is a Profession without Practice, a Form without Substance, a *Caput mortuum* without Spirit, and hereafter it will prove the arrantest Cheat, and, like a broken Staff, only disappoint those who lean upon it. And as they are thus uselefs, so they are no less contemptible among all good Judges of the Worth of Men. While the true Spirit of *Christianity* flourished, these unfavoury *Christians* would have been thrown out of the Church, as being unworthy to be admitted into so sacred a Society, and a Scandal and Disgrace to their Profession; and tho', since the Relaxation of Discipline, they meet with fairer Quarter in the World, yet, if they had their Due, other *Christians* should disown them, and refuse to converse with them. *If any Man that is called a Brother, saith St. Paul, be a Fornicator, or covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner; I have written to you, with such a one no not to eat,* 1 Cor. v. 11.

(2.) Then for the *Christian Church* in general, what poor Feats has it done since the ancient Spirit of *Christianity* decay'd? While it was in its Vigour, it awaked the whole World, it made a mighty Reformation in Men's Lives, infusing its good Principles into their Minds, and its good Manners into their Conversations; but now, for a great many Years since, instead of being an holy Discipline, it has been only a dry System of Opinions, and *Christians* are no longer distinguished

guished by their excellent Morals; *Christianity* has been at a full Stand, and has been no longer able to do any Thing towards the Propagation of the Gospel, or the Reformation of Mankind; And how, since that Time, it has been trod under Foot of Men, the many Indignities thrown upon it do sufficiently justify; many famous Churches are extinguished, *Mahometism* has strangely prevailed, *Antichrist* with his Party have usurp'd the chief Seat of Power in the Church, and have trod under Foot the few true Members that were left; the secular Powers have cramped the Discipline to that Degree, that we have, instead thereof, little left besides a poor Wish on *Ashwednesday*, that the old godly Discipline may be restored; Enthusiasts of all sorts are for pulling up and destroying the Church, Root and Branch; and a new Heresy is sprung up in our Days, which makes the Church only a Creature of the State. *Atheism* and Irreligion do daily prevail; so that our Saviour's Prediction in the Text is literally accomplished, since *Christians* have lost the Savour of good Life themselves, and do no longer preserve Men from Corruption, but are as unfavoury in their Conversations as *Turks* or *Heathens*. They have been reckoned *good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trampled under Foot of Men*.

From the whole of this *Threatning* it is an easy Matter to gather, that our Saviour's Design in it was to guard us against every Thing that may make us unfavoury, or render us usefess, as *Christians*, to the World. In Pursuance of which Design, I shall briefly consider these two Things:

1. What those Things are which make *Christians* insipid or unfavoury. And,

2. How

2. How this Savouriness may be preserved or recovered.

1. What are those Things which make *Christians* insipid or unfavoury. I answer, Ignorance, Inconsideration, worldly Cares, an evil Conscience, Scandal, Flattery, Cowardice, or whatever else hinders either our own being seasoned with Principles of Holiness and Virtue, or our Communication of them to others.

(1.) Ignorance keeps the Eye of the Mind so dark, that it can't see; and the Palate of the Mind so vitiated, that it can't taste the Savouriness of Religion.

(2.) Inconsideration, by the slight and superficial Views it takes of religious Matters, and the Shortness of the Time it affords for their Operation, hinders them from having that Efficacy which is necessary towards their thorough seasoning the Heart and Soul with good Notions, and a lively Sense of good Things.

(3.) Worldly Cares, by diverting the Intention of the Mind to other Objects, and employing it too much about lesser Matters, eat out the Care of Religion; so that the Mind, instead of receiving a deep Tincture and Impression, is but very lightly sprinkled with virtuous Notions and Sentiments.

(4.) An evil Conscience both provokes God to withdraw his Grace, and to leave us to our own Lusts, which will quickly give the Mind a quite wrong Tincture, and likewise indisposes us for that Wisdom, and Utterance, and Freedom of Exhortation and Reproof, for the just Communication of those Truths which are necessary towards the seasoning of others with virtuous Principles,

ciples, and towards the exhorting and reproofing them for their Faults.

(5.) Scandalous Sins take away all Heart and Courage, which is necessary towards the searching out the Corruption of Men, and cleansing them from it. For with what Face can he that is so deep in Guilt himself admonish and reprove others? The great Reformers of Mankind had need to be free from all Imputation of those Sins in themselves, for which they are to administer the Salt of Instruction and Admonition to others.

(6.) Flattery administers Sugar, instead of Salt, to eat out the Corruption of the World; and if the Vices of Men can't be cured with Sugar-plums, the Flatterer will do nothing that will put the Patient to any Pain or Uneasiness; whereas this Salt that seasons and preserves Mankind from Corruption, is lively and sharp, and must thoroughly pierce, in order to the tincturing of Men with pious Principles, and good Morals.

(7.) *Lastly*, Cowardice, for the same Reason, is afraid to disoblige, and to put Men to Pain and Uneasiness; and therefore chuses rather to sow Pillows of Security for them to sleep quietly upon, than to corrode and nettle them with the Salt of Home-admonition and Advice.

2. In the next Place, let us consider how this Savouriness may be preserved or recovered. As to this, I shall briefly offer these few Advices, and so make an End of this Discourse.

1. Let us beware of all such Doctrines as have a Tendency to wear off a serious Sense of Religion in ourselves, and consequently unqualify us for inspiring it into others. There are many of these Doctrines, which tho' they answer the End

of *Atheism*, yet are introduced and countenanced under great Pretensions to Religion, and are more easily imbibed than the most serious Truths of Religion itself, meeting with such a Friend within as our own Lusts are. Examples of such Doctrines are these: 1. That all Mankind from all Eternity had their Fate allotted them, without any Regard to their own Merits or Demerits; and that this stands unalterable, so as no Diligence or Negligence of ours can reverse it. 2. That God doth not determine Men's final Happiness or Misery equitably by the Rules of his revealed Will, but arbitrarily by his own secret Pleasure. 3. That a Man, who, by the Grace of God, has once been reformed from his evil Courses, can never totally and finally fall away into the Ways of Sin. 4. That evil Habits, wilfully continued in, are reconcilable with a State of Grace. 5. That Repentance is nothing but a Sorrow for Sin, and that we may have true Repentance without Amendment of Life. 6. That God is all Mercy; and tho' he threatens Hell and Damnation to Sinners, to bring them and bind them to their better Behaviour; yet sure he will be more merciful than to put it in Execution. 7. That a Death-bed Repentance may be safely enough relied upon. These and the like Doctrines, which carnal Men do very greedily suck in, have a mighty Aptness and Tendency in them to lull the Conscience asleep, and to prevent those Pains and Uneasinesses which the Salt of heavenly Doctrine would give us in the seasoning our own Minds, and preserving them from Corruption, and which we must give to others, before we can thoroughly awake them to a Sense of their Duty.

2. Endeavour thoroughly to understand, firmly to believe, and to be possessed with a lively Sense of the great Truths of Religion. It is very much to be lamented, that so many take upon them the *Christian* Profession, without troubling themselves to enquire into the Truth of its particular Doctrines. They are *Christians by Birth*, as they would have been *Mahometans*, if they had been born of *Mahometan* Parents; and never trouble themselves to enquire or examine afterwards into the Truth or Falshood, the Slightness or Importance of the Doctrines they have so swallowed in the Lump. Certainly it is not enough that we are thus Believers in gross, unless we understand and believe the particular Articles of the *Christian* Faith; nor is the bare Belief of them sufficient, unless we have a lively Sense of them upon our Spirits, such as will stir us up to a Diligence in all Duty. And this lively Sense can't be come at, but by frequent and serious Meditation, and putting ourselves under the Power and Influence of divine Truths.

3. Let us take all Care to keep our Minds in a constant good Frame and Temper, which is done by a regular Practice of Piety and Devotion, and by a continual Watchfulness against Temptations. The Morning's Resolution, and the Evening's Examination, with frequent devoting ourselves to God in the holy Sacrament, with Prayer and Meditation, are great Means to keep the Mind in this good Temper; and this will both season our own Minds with good Notions, and enable us so to administer to others, as to preserve them from Corruption.

4. Lastly,

4. *Lastly*, Let us take a near Prospect of Death, and of the future State of Rewards and Punishments, and consider how little this World will avail us when we come to die, unless we have taken Care to lay up Treasure in Heaven, by doing a great deal of Good in our Life-time. The Time is shortly a coming on, when it will avail us nothing at all to have been great or rich in this World, except we have been as good as great. It is a strange Thing how *Satan* does lull us so fast asleep, that the providing for the few Days or Years we have to live here, employs our Thoughts and Time more than the providing for that vast Eternity into which we are shortly to enter. The Meditations of it would of all Things the most effectually season our Minds with good Thoughts and Resolutions, and prompt us to exert our Faculties to the utmost, to rescue as many others as we can from the common Corruption.

Now God of his infinite Mercy season our Hearts with his Grace, and preserve us all from the Pollutions which are in the World through Lust, and so fit us for his everlasting Kingdom, by the Merits and Mediation of his dear Son, *Jesus Christ*, our Lord. *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N XXVI.

M A T. V. 14.

Ye are the Light of the World. A City that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.

Ver. 15. *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Bushel: But on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.*

Ver. 16. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

The Third Sermon on this Text.

AS our Saviour's Doctrine is truly admirable in all the Parts of it, so if we may be allowed to take Notice of one shining Jewel in his Discourse, where there are so many, I think nothing can be more beautiful or luminous, nothing more pertinent and apposite to the Purpose, than all his Parables and Similitudes; in which, from Things plain and obvious to the Understanding of the meanest, he explains the greatest and noblest Truths, but in a Manner which has nothing of the Sordidness and Meanness of those Comparisons, which are every where to be met with in human Authors.

Our Saviour's Design in this Part of his Sermon which I have now read, is to stir up *Christians*

stians to a bright and exemplary Piety. In order to this, he makes use of two such Similitudes, *the Salt of the Earth*, and *the Light of the World*, as are very apt to put them in Mind of that extraordinary Exemplariness in their own Lives, and Zeal in reforming the Lives of the rest of Mankind, which he expected of them.

Having spoke to the first, *the Salt of the Earth*, I go on now to the second, *Ye are the Light of the World*; where, first, we are to remember, that it is the same *Ye* to whom he had addressed himself at the 11th Verse, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and persecute you*; and to whom he addresses himself all throughout the Sermon, that is to say, *all Christians*. And let no Man wonder that such high Titles as these, *the Salt of the Earth*, and *the Light of the World*, should be given to *Christians*: This is usual in the *New Testament*. *St. Peter*, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. addresses them thus: *But ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People*. And *St. Paul*, *Phil.* ii. 15. exhorts the *Philippians* to be *blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke, in the mids of a crooked and perverse Nation*; among whom, says he, *ye shine*, or, as it is in the Margin of our Bibles, *shine ye as Lights in the World*. For we are not to take our Notions of a *Christian* from what the Generality of those called *Christians* are now a-days, but from what they were then, when there was nothing to tempt them to dissemble, and when the Life and Profession of a *Christian* kept equal Pace. It is the forgetting of this, that induces so many Writers in the Church of *Rome* to appropriate many Things which are spoke in the
holy

holy Scriptures of *Christians* in general, to their religious Orders; and so many of the reformed Writers, to appropriate the high *Christian* Duties, to Apostles and Pastors; which, I confess, I look upon as a very dangerous Attempt, and utterly foreign to our Saviour's Design in this Sermon on the Mount, as I proved by many Arguments in my second and third Discourses upon it, which I shall not now stand to repeat.

Taking it for granted, then, that it is still the same Auditory to which our Saviour directs his Discourse, that is, all his Disciples, or all *Christians*, for *Christians* were then called Disciples; I shall go on to consider what our Saviour meant by this Character of them, that they are *the Light of the World*: By which Expression I understand thus much, that as God makes use of the Sun, Moon, and Stars, to give Light to the natural World; so *Christ* was to make use of *Christians* as Instruments to illuminate the World in a spiritual Sense, that is, (to take it out of the Metaphor) that by their Means ignorant Men might come to the Knowledge of God and their Duty, Men in Error might come to be convinced of their Errors, and brought over to the Truth, Men in Unbelief might be brought over to the Faith, and Men immersed in Vice might be brought over to the Practice of *Christian* Virtue: By their Means, I say, chiefly by the good Examples they should give the World. This Doctrine our Saviour backs with these two Considerations, 1. That in the Station *Christians* were in, they could not be hid; there would be abundance of Witnesses of their Actions: *A City set on an Hill cannot be hid.* 2. That they were set

up for this very Purpose, to be Patterns to the World of holy Living; *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel, but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.* And therefore from all this the Conclusion follows naturally, Ver. 16. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

To begin with the Character here given of *Christians*, that they are *the Light of the World*, the Words are few, but very emphatical. I shall from them consider these two Things:

I. In what Respect *Christians* are compared to *the Light*.

II. What is further implied by this Addition of *the World*, that they are the *Light of the World*.

I. In what Respect *Christians* are compared to *the Light*. For understanding of this, we are to consider,

In what Respect Men are said to be in Dark-ness. And

What Way it is the Duty of *Christians* to be instrumental in bringing Men out of Dark-ness.

As to the first, in the Stile of the holy Scripture, we are said to be in Dark-ness these four or five Ways; in Respect of, 1. The Dark-ness of Ignorance. 2. The Dark-ness of Error. 3. The Dark-ness of Unbelief. 4. The Dark-ness of Sleep or Inconsideration. And, 5. The Dark-ness of Sin and Vice.

1. The first sort of Darknefs Men are under, is that of *Ignorance*, I mean Ignorance of spiritual Matters; for as to many natural and philosophical, nay, many historical and political Truths, it is no great Matter if we are ignorant of them. It is certain our blessed Lord made it none of his Business to enlighten the World as to those Matters; what he brought to Light was what relates to our Souls, and our future State, *Life and Immortality*, of which the World was very ignorant before; both that there was such a Thing, and how it was to be attained. The Times before the Gospel are justly called *Times of Ignorance*; *the Times of this Ignorance God winked at*, says St. Paul, *Acts* xvii. 30. And the Gentiles, who knew not the Gospel, are called *the Gentiles who know not God*, 1 *Theff.* iv. 5. And elsewhere, the Description the same Apostle gives of the Gentiles, is, *Eph.* iv. 18. *that they had their Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Heart.*

2. The second sort of Darknefs Men are under, is that of Error and Superstition, and this was the Condition our Saviour's Disciples found the World in; they were so far carried away with Prejudice and Prepossession, that it was no easy Matter for the Light of Truth to enter: An eminent Instance of which we have in the Men of *Lystra*, *Acts* xiv. who when they saw a notable Miracle wrought in curing a Cripple, rather than they would ascribe the Cure to *Jesus Christ*, whose Apostles *Paul* and *Barnabas* were, and in whose Name they had wrought the Cure; they pretended *Barnabas* was *Jupiter*, and *Paul* *Mer-*
F f 2 *curius*,

curius, and so would have done Sacrifice to them under these Notions: And at *Athens* the chief Obstacle *St. Paul* found to the Admission of his Doctrine was, that *they were so superstitious*. This led them to the Worship of all the Gods of the *Heathen*, such Darknes were they under. *St. Paul* took Occasion, from the Inscription of one of their Altars, *to the unknown God*, to preach to them the true God, who made Heaven and Earth; *Whom ye ignorantly worship*, says he, or rather, *whom ye worship without knowing him, him declare I unto you*, Acts xvii. 23. *Ὁν ἀγνοῦντες ἐυσεβᾶτε*.

3. There is a third sort of Darknes, the Darknes of *Unbelief*, when a Man obstinately stands out against the clearest Evidence. There is no one so blind, we say, as he that will not see; so there is no Man so hard to be convinced, as an obstinate Bigot in Error and Infidelity, that thinks himself obliged against his own Convictions to adhere to preconceived Opinions and Prejudices.

4. There is a Darknes of *Sleep and Inconsideration*, when Men, bewitched with the Pleasures of Sin, are apt to forget Matters of greater Concern and Importance. It is with Relation to these *St. Paul* exhorts, Rom. xiii. 11. *And that knowing the Time, that now it is high Time for us to awake out of Sleep, for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed. The Night is far spent, the Day is at Hand: Let us therefore cast off the Works of Darknes, and let us put on the Armour of Light*.

5. The living in a *vicious Course*, is a State of Darknes, Sin blinding the Understanding, hardening the Heart, searing the Conscience, employing the Man in the Works of Darknes, such

as will not bear the Test of the Light. Thus the Apostle advises, that *we have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes*, but that we rather reprove them, Eph. v. 11.

Thus we see how we are said to be in Darknes. The next Inquiry must be, what Way *Christians* ought to be instrumental in bringing Men out of this Darknes, for in so far they are *Lights of the World*.

1. And first, as to *Teaching*, for the Cure of Ignorance. Although the chiefest Part of that Duty is incumbent upon those called *Teachers*, yet it is required, even of private *Christians*, that they should both be well stocked with divine Knowledge themselves, and should teach and admonish others. See Col. iii. 16. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and Hymns and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in your Hearts to the Lord*. Undoubtedly there is a Teaching incumbent upon private *Christians* in their several Stations, both Men and Women being much commended in the holy Scriptures for administering it upon proper Occasions. It is true the publick Teaching is by *Christ's* Appointment limited to a certain Order of Men, but for the elder Men privately to instruct the younger, nay, even for the elder Matrons to instruct the younger Women in their Duty, it is a very commendable Practice, being one of the good Qualifications St. Paul requires of aged Women, Tit. ii. 4. *That they teach the young Women to be sober, to love their Husbands, to love their Children, to be discreet, chaste, Keepers at Home, good, obedient to their own Husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed*.

2. And as to *Error and Superstition*, there is no Doubt but that it is lawful and commendable even for private *Christians* to rescue Men from it, if they have but Skill and Knowledge enough to manage the Controversy. Indeed where there is any Fear of the want of that, the Apostle St. Paul is of Opinion they had better let it alone. *Him that is weak in the Faith*, says he, *receive you, but not to doubtful Disputations*, Rom. xiv. 1. Otherwise, as I take it, the Encouragement is general, Jam. v. 19. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.*

3. As to the dispelling the Darknefs of Unbelief, and contributing towards begetting true Faith in as many as we can, we do not find but that it is an approved Practice in all *Christians*, both Men and Women. Thus we find that the mad Man, who dwelt among the Tombs, Mark v. being cured, was commanded by Jesus to go Home to his Friends, and tell them how great Things the Lord had done for him, and had had Compassion on him. Thus the Samaritan Woman went into the City of Samaria, and said to the People, John iv. 29. *Come, see a Man, which hath told me all Things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?* And thus indeed it is a noble Rule, Luke xxii. 32. *Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren.*

4. As to the Darknefs of Sleep and Inconsideration, there is no kinder Office than to jog and awaken our Neighbour out of this sleepy Disease, which is incident to the good as well as the bad; for we hear of the *ten Virgins*, the wise as well as the

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the foolish, that while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept, Mat. xxv. 5. The Duty of Exhortation, to prevent this evil Heart of Unbelief creeping upon us, and our being hardened in a sinful Course, is a common mutual Duty, which we all owe one to another. *Take heed, Brethren*, says the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. iii. 12. *lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day; lest any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

5. *Lastly*, As to the Darkeness occasioned by *living in a vicious Course*; it was a Precept even under the Law, Lev. xix. 17. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.* And under the Gospel, Gal. vi. 1. *Brethren, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness.*

From all which we may gather, in what Sense *Christians* are to be a *Light to Mankind*; but there is one Way yet behind, more universal than any of the rest, and perhaps more directly here meant, and that is, *the Light of good Example*, which our Saviour wills us to set up to all Men; such an eminent good Example as the World never saw before.

So much for the first Thing I proposed to consider, in what Respect *Christians* are compared to *Light*; it is with Relation to those several Ways of dispelling Darkeness from Men, that I have described.

II. I come now, in the next Place, to consider what is further implied by this Addition of *the*

World; Ye are the Light of the World. And there are two or three Things I apprehend to be meant by this Expression.

1. It is implied, that the Bounds of the Church were to be enlarged, that the *Gentiles* were to be called in to be Partakers of the glorious Light of the Gospel.

2. It is implied, that those very Persons who were now our Saviour's Auditors, should have the Honour to be made use of, to propagate the Gospel all the World over.

3. It is implied, that they must be much more eminent and exemplary, to become Lights of the World, than the *Jews*, who were only Lights of that particular Country of *Judea*; as a great Room requires a greater Illumination, to enlighten it, than a smaller one.

1. *First*, I say, by this Expression, that *Christians* were to be *the Light of the World*, is implied, that the Bounds of the Church were to be much enlarged, and that the *Gentiles* were to be admitted to equal Privileges with the *Jews*; which was a great Secret at this Time, and would require our serious Consideration, both to observe the Enlargement of the Mercy, and the Difficulty resulting from it, that there is so great a Part of the World yet in Darkness, notwithstanding this gracious Intention of our Saviour; which are both Subjects of that large Extent, that they are not to be attempted now, in the End of a Sermon.

2^{dly}, This Expression serves to quicken the Attention and Diligence of our Saviour's Auditors; for it was here signified to them, what a noble Service they were designed for. Here, likewise,

wife, we might find many Things worthy of our Contemplation, that God should chuse such weak Instruments for this glorious Work, as these his first Auditors were: Not Men of Power and Authority, not Men of Learning and Eloquence, not Men of natural Courage and Resolution; but that there was as great a Miracle in fitting the Instruments for the Work, as in carrying on the Work itself, against all the Opposition of the greatest Powers that were then upon Earth.

3dly, This Expression implies, that these Lights should be much more eminent and conspicuous, and give a much more noble Example, than what was requisite to cast Light only in one Country of *Judea*. Their Task was much more difficult, and lay much more dispersed, as the Darkness of the World was much greater, and therefore required a much greater Degree of Illumination.

But instead of entring upon these Observations, I shall sum all up in one practical Application to ourselves, namely, to stir us up to consider, how we answer this Character in my Text, of being *the Light of the World*. This was a true Character of the Primitive Church; I wish I could say the same of the Christian Church at this Day. But, alas! instead of that Activity and Zeal to propagate Christian Knowledge, and to dispel the Clouds of Ignorance and Barbarity, which keep the Minds of Men in Darkness; for us, he that is ignorant may be ignorant still; and he that is filthy, may be filthy still. Tho' the World is much better opened by greater Discoveries of new Countries, and greater Improvements

provements of Trade and Navigation than there were then, we have made use of these Advantages, not for the Instruction or Conversion of the Heathen, but for propagating of Trade, with all the Frauds that attend the most unchristian way of managing it. Instead of recovering Men out of their Errors and Superstitions, we have rather riveted and confirmed them in their evil Ways; while we shew nothing of Religion among them neither in Life nor Doctrine, but rather an Atheism and Indifference, and greater Signs of Infidelity than are to be found among themselves. Sure we are not far from those Times, of which our Saviour said, *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith upon the Earth?* There is such an universal Coldness and Indifferency in all Things relating to Religion among Christians. But I give too mild a Character of this Spirit, when I represent it under the Name of Coldness and Indifferency; there is something worse than this; even a Zeal to oppose and hinder every thing that has any Tendency to the Encouragement of Religion, or the Propagation of the Gospel; and we will much more readily concur in Methods of Destruction and Extirpation, than in any Endeavours towards the Instruction or Conversion of the Heathen in our Neighbourhood. It is no wonder the Light of our Religion shines so dim to others, when it is even almost extinct among ourselves. A great many, instead of frequenting the Worship and Service of God, employ his Day in journeying, or visiting, or any thing, or nothing, rather than they will venture to lend so much as an Ear, to the Instructions which are to be met with from reading

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ing of the Scriptures, or hearing of them read and explain'd. And of those who afford their bodily Presence at those Duties, how few are there who afford Attention or Presence of Mind? And yet fewest of all, who ever set themselves to amend or reform their Life and Manners, from any thing they learn of their Duty. There is such a general Neglect, or rather Contempt of Religion; there is such an Hardness and Impenetrableness of Heart; there is such a Dulness and Absence of Mind as to all religious Performances; there is such a Treachery of Memory; and, in short, such an Incurribleness of Life and Manners; that we have nothing almost left but the bare Shell and Outside of Religion, and are for the far greatest Part utter Strangers to the inward Power and Life of it. Not to speak of the Works of Darkness, which are as freely committed among Christians, as if they believed nothing of Heaven or Hell, of God or Devil: Of the Convictions of Conscience at present, or of a Judgment to come. And is this to be *Lights of the World*? For shame, let us either renounce our Christianity, or endeavour to live up to the Duties and Characters of it. Let us not follow the hidden Things of Dishonesty, nor give into the black Vices of the World; but distinguish ourselves by the conscientious Practice of the Virtues of the Gospel; particularly those contained in this excellent Sermon on the Mount. Let us learn to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for the blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us*
from

from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. Deceive not yourselves; Christianity is quite another Thing than the Lives of the present Christians represent it to be. We were designed for a *peculiar People*, and an *Holy Nation*, *shewing forth the Praises of him who hath called us out of Darknes into his marvellous Light.* Our Life and Manners, let me tell you, would have been much more excusable, and would have suited much better in the Times of Darknes and Ignorance, than under the Light of the Gospel. And if we content ourselves with the bare Knowledge of our Duty, without the Practice of it, our Saviour has told us what will become of these Structures that have such sandy Foundations; when attempted by any strong Temptation; down they'll come, *and great will be the Fall thereof.*

Now God of his infinite Mercy give us Grace to consider, in this our Day, the Things which belong to our Peace, before the Time come that they be hid from our Eyes. And to this great God, &c.

S E R M O N XXVII.

M A T. V. 14.

— *A City that is set on an Hill cannot be hid.*

Ver. 15. *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel: But on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.*

The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

TH ESE two Similitudes of *a City on an Hill*, and *a Candle on a Candlestick*, are two Branches of the foregoing Character of Christians, whom our Saviour, in the Words immediately preceding, calls *the Light of the World*. They are used by him in Pursuance of the same Design still, as Arguments to stir up Christians to an exemplary Behaviour.

I shall enquire into the Meaning of them; and from thence it will appear, of what Force they are to induce the Conclusion that follows at the next Verse, *Let your Light so shine before Men, &c.*

First then, let us enquire into the Meaning of this Property of Light, the *Conspicuousness* of it; on Account of which, Christians are here compared to *a City set on an Hill*, and *a Candle on a Candlestick*; which two I take to be both a Prediction

diction of their Circumstances, and an Intimation of their Duty. I intend to consider both these as represented by those two Similitudes.

I. As a Prediction of the Circumstances of Christians, what they should be in the World. The first of these Similitudes doth chiefly point at this, namely, that of *a City on an Hill, which cannot be hid*; for this foretels the conspicuous Eminency of the Christian Church; the other has a more immediate Aspect on their Duty; that they were set up for this End, that as *a Candle on a Candlestick*, they might from their Example shew others what sort of Persons they ought to be. To begin with the first Similitude, comparing Christians to *a City on an Hill, which cannot be hid*: This I take to be a Prediction of the future Circumstances of Christians, *q. d.* Tho' at present ye are but an inconsiderable Handful of People, and make no Figure in the World, the Time is coming on when this Mustard Seed shall grow up into a great Tree, and this little Leaven shall leaven the whole Lump; when ye shall be very eminent for your exemplary Lives, and patient Sufferings, and glorious Miracles; when ye shall be a great Body of People, a noble Society, the Christian Church, ordered and governed by the best Laws and Discipline, which shall overtop and obscure all the Pagan Churches in the World, and draw the Eyes and Attention of all Spectators, and even provoke the Hatred and Jealousy of Princes and Commonwealths; and therefore ye had need to walk very circumspectly; your Actions will be all sifted and scanned to the utmost; and your Life and Doctrine exposed upon the Theatre of the World. This I take
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to be the right Paraphrase and Meaning of the
Words; from them I shall consider these two
Things.

I. How these Predictions were accomplished.

II. What Care and Exemplariness of Life is
consequent upon them.

I. Let us consider what way these Predictions
concerning the Eminency of Christians were ac-
complished. And here we are to remember, how
from very small Beginnings Christians rose to a
great Height and Eminency, not of worldly
Splendour, but of every Thing that was truly va-
luable; to make them a glorious Church. Some
Writers of the Church of *Rome* make use of this
Text, to prove that Wealth and Riches, and
outward Splendor, is one of the Marks of the
true Church; but they could not perhaps have
fallen upon any thing more disagreeable, either
to the Doctrine of the New Testament, which
every where commends a Spirit of Poverty, and
a Mind disengaged from the World; or to the
State of the Primitive Church in its most flou-
rishing Circumstances. This Eminency and Con-
spicuity then must relate to such Things, which
our Saviour set a greater Value upon than world-
ly Wealth; and which he thought deserved in-
deed to be the Glory of the Church, and of the
particular Members of it. For I must observe,
that whatever our Saviour foretold to this Audito-
ry, under express Addresses to them, *Ye are*, or
Ye shall be so and so, was fulfilled to themselves;
and not put off to their Posterity in future Gene-
rations. Let us enquire then in what Respects
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Christians were to be so eminent and conspicuous, as to be resembled to *a City set on an Hill, which could not be hid*. I will not pretend to enumerate all these Respects; but shall endeavour to mention the principal of them.

(1.) *First* then, as the *Messiah* had been foretold by the Prophets, and the World filled with great Expectations of him, Christians pretending themselves to be the Disciples of the Messiah, were to expect to be eyed by all Men, and very narrowly inspected, that if any Flaw could be found in their Doctrine or Life, it might be detected. Especially considering that so many being in Expectation of a Great Temporal Prince, and of great Riches and Preferments in his Service, would be mad at the Disappointment, and set themselves with the greatest Strictness to enquire into the Lives and Doctrine of those who pretended to set up a Messiah, so opposite to all their Expectations. And therefore in this Respect they were to be exposed, like a City set on an Hill; not like a low obscure Cottage, built in a Bottom.

(2.) But besides those who were acquainted with the Prophecies of the Old Testament, Christians were to be exposed to other Men, and were to attract the Eyes of the Heathen World towards them. The silencing the Heathen Oracles; the speaking in all Languages; and the working all other Miracles; their spreading their Doctrine through the whole then known World, which all the Power and Policy of the secular Princes could not put a Stop to; their Union in such strict Bonds of Friendship among themselves, and their Numbers increasing, notwithstanding the violentest Opposition of all earthly Powers; and

XXVII.] *like a City on an Hill*, Mat. V. 14. 449
and their fixing themselves in all the most noted
Cities of the World; these Things were enough
to lay them open to all Mankind, and to expose
them to the Admiration of some, and the Cen-
sures of others.

(3.) Perhaps this Character of *a City on an Hill*
may particularly point at Christians as a Society,
and a Church, separated from the World; a
Company of Men, not hiding their Principles in
Mysteries, to be concealed from the World as
the Heathen did; but owning all their Doctrines,
and professing them freely before all Mankind;
exposed too like a City on an Hill to all Wea-
thers: Like a City too formed into a Body; and
that governed by a very exact Discipline; stand-
ing firm upon a Rock, that all the Powers on
Earth, after all their Batteries, could not demo-
lish or subvert. I mention these Things, not
that I would extend the Similitude to them all;
but only in so far as all these Things contribute
to the making Christians conspicuous; to the
setting them in a clear Light; and to the giving
them a Figure in the World; which is the thing
here pointed at. So much for the Prediction of
their Circumstances.

II. Let us next consider, what Care and Ex-
emplariness of Life is consequent upon this Pre-
diction.

If Christians were to be so much exposed, to
so many Spectators, so many Censurers; if they
were to be brought upon the Theatre, then this
required in general a great Decorum of good Be-
haviour. More particularly it required great Pru-
dence and Circumspectness, Courage and Pati-
ence, good Example in all manner of Christian

Virtue, Openness as to their Doctrines, and Sincerity as to their Lives.

1. *First*, This Conspicuousness of Christians, obliged them to great Prudence and Circumspection. Had Christians been to live a private, unknown Life, like that of Monks in their Cells, there would have been no great Occasion for this Virtue of Prudence. But our Saviour designing his Religion for the Benefit of Society, and Christians as Patterns to the rest of the World, thought fit to expose it and them, to be observed, sifted and tried to the utmost. *We are made a Spectacle to the World, and to Angels, and to Men*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 9. As Gentlemen when they go abroad into Company, take care that every thing be decent in their Garb and Behaviour, whereas they allow themselves the Liberty to go more negligently at Home; so the Behaviour of Christians being to be publickly exposed, was to be circumspect, according to the Advice of the Apostle, Col. iv. 5. *Walk in Wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the Time.* And, Eph. v. 15. *See that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as wise, redeeming the Time, because the Days are evil.*

2. The same Conspicuousness obliged Christians to great Courage and Patience. It was no common Trial they were to undergo; they were to be brought before Rulers, and Kings, for Christ's Sake; they were to be made a *Gazing-Stock by Reproaches and Afflictions*, Heb. x. 33. If either the highest Authority could look them out of Countenance, or the severest Punishments deter them from their Christian Profession, they were to look for it; for they were to expect the

XXVII.] *like a City on an Hill*, Mat. V. 14. 45
Times, when they that killed them should think they did God good Service; and their very Eminency and Conspicuousness would expose them to all the Storms, which a lower Situation might have avoided; all this required a stayed Courage, Patience, and Constancy, to endure all Weathers.

3. This Conspicuity required a great Exemplariness in all Virtue; for as the Eyes of the World were to be upon them, they might expect their Actions would be very narrowly inspected; nothing they could do would lie hid, but every Thing was to be exposed, and well known, and therefore they were so to behave themselves, as that they should not need to be ashamed to have their Actions discover'd to the World.

4. This Conspicuity required a great Freedom and Openness in declaring and professing their Doctrine. They were not to expect, as another Church has done since, that they could keep the World in Ignorance of their Principles; there was nothing our Lord had communicated to them, tho' never so privately, that he desired them to conceal; *what he told them in the Ear, they were commanded to publish on the House-Tops*, Mat. x. 27. Let it be sifted and canvassed by all Men, for it will bear the Test. Let Philosophers try it by the Principles of Reason; let Moralists compare it with their exactest Rules of Ethicks; let Princes and Commonwealths examine whether it makes good or bad Subjects; and Subjects, whether it makes good or bad Princes and Magistrates; and so in all the other Relations of Life, let it be enquired, whether Christianity mairs or mends them: Let the learned *Jews* compare it with the

Prophecies of the Old Testament; and the learned *Gentiles*, with the best Light of natural Reason; let all Men observe whether Christianity doth not make all Men and Women more useful in their several Stations than they were before. In short, Christians were not desired by their Master to keep People in Ignorance, but were required freely to publish and profess their Faith, and to own their Practice and Manners to the World.

5. This Conspicuity was to guard them against all Dissimulation and Hypocrisy. For if they were to be *a City set on an Hill, which cannot be hid*, it was in vain for them to pretend to be Christians, and yet live in secret Wickedness. There was indeed no Institution, which did so much discourage Hypocrisy, as Christianity did. The World being their Enemies, and making the strictest Search into their Lives, they had no Encouragement for Hypocrisy from thence. And they had yet less from the Principles of their Religion, which taught them to do every Thing with an Eye to God; and to expect that their Father, who saw in secret, would reward them openly.

So much for the *first* Similitude in the Text, that Christians are like *a City set on an Hill, which cannot be hid*.

II. I proceed next to the *second*, that they are a lighted Candle set on a Candlestick. *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Busbel; but on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.* As the other Similitude foretold the Circumstances of Christians in the World;
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so this does more especially point at their Duty. This was the Design for which they were set up by God; and this is the Business they ought to aim at, by their Doctrine and Example, to shew the World what Sort of Persons they ought to be. In the Words there are these three Things implied.

1. That the World before our Saviour's Appearance lived in great Ignorance and Wickedness.

2. That the Gospel is the Means appointed by God to bring the World out of this State.

3. That it is the Duty of Christians, who are to hold out this Light to the World, to take Care not to suppress or obscure it; but to set it off to the greatest Advantage.

I. That the World before our Saviour's Appearance was in Darkness; that is, lived in Ignorance and Wickedness. This being only presupposed and implied in the Text, I shall not dwell long upon it: As to the Heathen World, the Thing is very plain, for they were Strangers to the true God; had little or no Notion of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; most of them looked upon that Part of the Doctrine of their Poets and other Writers, as altogether fabulous. (*Fabulæq; manes.* Hor.) They had very imperfect Notions of their Duty, and none at all of the Necessity of the Grace of God to enable them to perform it, and of the way of obtaining that Grace, by Prayer to God through the Mediation of Jesus Christ. And as to the *Jews*, tho' they were much better instructed in the

Knowledge of God, and had a great Insight into their Duty, yet being a very carnal People, their Notions of Immortality were exceeding dim; their Promises for the most Part related to Temporal Prosperity; their Sentiments of the Messiah were wildly wrong; and, through the Misinterpretations of their Doctors, their Understanding as to the Law and their Duty was exceedingly corrupted: So that in Effect, the great Things of the Law were totally neglected, and the little Ceremonials and Trifles of it were only minded. This was the State of the World when our Lord came into it. Let us next see what Method he took to enlighten the dark World. And this leads me to the *Second* Thing I observed from the Words, namely,

2. That the Gospel is the Means appointed by God to bring the World out of this State of Ignorance and Wickedness. This is the Candle set up to shew us our Way through this dark World. And indeed it can't be denied, that it is the greatest Light that ever was communicated to Men. I can't pretend to enumerate all the Particulars wherein the World is enlighten'd by it: But for your better apprehending this Notion, the chief of them I shall briefly mention. (1.) *First* then, As to the Knowledge of God, especially that most comfortable and useful Part of it, relating to his Love to Man, and the wonderful Method he has contrived to pass an Act of Pardon and Indemnity for his dear Son Jesus Christ's Sake, upon the easy Terms of Faith and Repentance; this is a Thing we owe wholly to the Gospel, and certainly it is the most valuable Piece of Knowledge that ever was imparted to the World. (2.) Our Duty

Duty is much better cleared up from the imperfect Notions of the Law, and the wrong Explanations of the *Jewish* Doctors; and especially the inward Part of Duty, in regulating the Thoughts and Intentions of the Heart, (which is the Life and Soul of Duty) is fully explained and thoroughly insisted on; instead of that formal, outward, Pharisaical Righteousness, to which the Interpreters of the Law among the *Jews* had restrained it.

(3.) Christianity has given us great Light, by the clear Promises it makes of Life and Immortality, to them that repent and obey the Gospel; and the plain Threatnings of eternal Misery in a future State, to the Unbelievers and Impenitent. For tho' as to the Particulars of the future Happiness and Misery, they are in a great Measure as yet unknown to us, because in this imperfect State perhaps we are not capable of distinct Notions of the Felicity or Infelicity of eternal Happiness or Torments; yet it can't be denied, that any Revelation which was ever made to the World of these Things before, was but mere Darkness, compared with that of the Gospel. Besides that, the future State of Happiness, the Immortality of the Soul, and Resurrection of the Body, is by the Gospel not only revealed, but proved and asserted beyond all Contradiction, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead. And what Light and Direction this gives in the regulating of our Lives, they who can see the Consequences of Things may easily discern. (4.) The perfect Pattern of all Virtue, which the Gospel affords in the spotless Example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, gives a very great Light into our Duty. Examples are far before Precepts; and all the Examples the World

ever had before, were very imperfect ones. What a mighty Advantage then must it be, that the Son of God himself should come down from Heaven, and give us a perfect Pattern of his own Precepts; especially of all the most difficult Parts of them, those relating to Self-denial and Patience, as well as Purity, Humility, and Meekness? (5.) The wonderful Grace of the Holy Ghost purchased by Christ, and offered and exhibited to us in the Gospel, by the Use of Prayer, Reading, Meditation, frequent Communion, and the diligent Improvement of our Talents; whereby our Minds are illuminated, and our Hearts sanctified, and our Lives reformed, is another Instance of the great Light set up by Christ in the Gospel. Now all these put together, and duly improved, will make the Gospel *a lighted Candle*, well fitted of itself, if it be advantageously placed, to give Light to all that are in the House: And this leads me to the *Third* and last Thing I observed in the Words; namely,

III. That it is the Duty of Christians, who are to hold out this Light to the World, to take Care not to suppress or obscure it; but to set it off to the greatest Advantage. Not to speak now of Pastors and Teachers, whose proper Business it is to bring Men from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, because I think they are not here principally meant; there are chiefly these three Ways whereby Christians in general obscure or suppress their Light; (1.) By neglecting to enlighten their own Minds with the Light of divine Truth. (2.) By neglecting to live up to the Knowledge they have of divine Things. (3.) By neglecting, in their several

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XXVII.] *Candle on a Candlestick*, Mat. V. 15. 457
Stations, to communicate their Knowledge to
others.

But I find the explaining of this, how we hide
our Candle under a Bushel; and how we may
hold it out to the best Advantage, would engage
me in a larger Subject of Discourse than is now fit
to be entred upon in the End of a Sermon, and
therefore I shall refer the Consideration of it to
another Opportunity. I must request you to im-
prove in your own Meditations what ye have heard;
and to form good Resolutions upon it; which
God give us all Grace duly to put in Execution,
for Jesus Christ's Sake; to whom, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXVIII.

MAT. V. 15.

Ver. 15. *Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buskel: But on a Candlestick, and it giveth Light to all that are in the House.*

The Fifth Sermon on this Text.

HAVING at the last Occasion entred a little on these Words; in which Christians are compared to *a lighted Candle*, I observed that as the foregoing Similitude of *a City on an Hill* foretold Christians their Fate and Circumstances in the World, so this teaches them more particularly their Duty, and the very End and Design for which they were set up by God; which was, by their Doctrine and Example to shew the World what kind of Persons they themselves ought to be. This is the general Purport of the Words. But more particularly I observed to you these three Things implied in them.

1. That the World, before our Saviour's Appearance, lived in great Ignorance and Wickedness.

2. That the Gospel is the Means appointed by God to bring the World out of this State.

3. That

3. That it is the Duty of Christians, who are to hold out this Light to the World, to take care not to suppress or obscure it; but to set it off to the greatest Advantage.

Having spoke to the two first of these, that the World, before our Saviour's Appearance, lived in Ignorance and Wickedness; and that the Gospel is the Means to bring them out of this State; I come now to the *Third*, that it is the Duty of Christians, who are to hold out this Light to the World, to take care not to suppress or obscure it; but to set it off to the greatest Advantage. In treating of this Matter, being I am persuaded our Saviour directs this Discourse to all Christians, I shall not allow myself to spend Time in considering what Way Pastors and Teachers are to make use of their Office, in bringing Men from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God; but shall confine what I have to say on this Subject to Christians in general. And as to them, I shall consider these two Things.

I. What Way they may be said to suppress the Light, or to hide their Candle under a Bushel.

II. How they may be said to hold it out to the best Advantage, *i. e. to set it on a Candlestick, that it may give Light to all that are in the House.*

I. As to the *First*, Christians may be said to suppress their Light, or to hide their Candle under a Bushel, these three Ways.

1. By neglecting to make use of the Means of Grace, whereby their own Minds may be duly enlighten'd.

2. By

2. By living in the Darkneſs of Sin and Vice, notwithstanding any Meaſure of Knowledge they may have in their Minds.

3. By not communicating their Knowledge in their ſeveral Stations to others, who might be the better for it.

1. *Fiſt* then, they may be ſaid to hide their Candle under a Buſhel, who neglect to make Uſe of the ſeveral Talents, whether natural or acquired, wherewith they are entrusted; by which Negligence it comes to paſs, that their own Minds are kept in Darkneſs; at leaſt leſs enlighten'd than they might have been, had they made due Uſe of thoſe Talents and Opportunities. Of this Sort, I reckon all thoſe, who either abuſe, or do not duly improve their natural Parts, ſuch as their Wit, Judgment, and Memory, of which God has given a plentiful Portion to ſome Men, who, if they had done their Part, might have been bright ſhining Lights in the World. Of this Sort likewise I reckon all thoſe who have had, or at leaſt might have had the Benefit of a good Education and Improvement, Providence having furniſhed them with the Bleſſing of good Parents, Teachers, Paſtors, Tutors, Guardians, Maſters, Miſtreſſes, Relations, Friends and Acquaintance; through whoſe Means, and by whoſe Inſtruction, Advice, or Example, they might have improved themſelves much more, both in the Knowledge and Practice of Religion and Virtue. Of this Sort likewise I reckon in the *Third* Place, all thoſe who neglect to obſerve, or make Uſe of, the various Providences they have met with in their Life, to bring them to a clearer Underſtanding, or better Senſe of their Duty. How many kind
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Providences have some People been entertained with, enough to allure them to the Love of good Things? And how many terrible Blows of Affliction, on the other hand, have been dealt to others, enough to discourage them in the Ways of Sin, if they had not wilfully blinded themselves both against the one and the other? *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see*; so complains the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. xxvi. 11. Or if we are a little sensible just while we are under the Lash, how quickly do we forget it, and return to our old Stupidity? And so, *Fourthly*, we contribute exceedingly to the keeping of our Minds in Darkness, when being instructed to read the Holy Scriptures, and other good Books, we make no other Use of that Talent, but to read such Books as are apt to debauch the Mind and Manners, and to obscure all those good Notions we have from the Principles of natural Religion or good Education. What a mighty Light would that one Book of the Holy Scriptures, duly studied, dart into our Minds; by enabling us both to see Things clearly ourselves, and by qualifying us to enlighten others? And, *Fifthly*, I know no greater Occasion of the Darkness of our own Minds, than that we do not reflect upon, and consider the Truths we know; so that they have no greater Influence upon us, than if we knew them not. There is only this Difference between Ignorance and Inconsideration; in the one, we are totally deprived of Light and Knowledge; in the other, we are so dead drunk, or so fast asleep, that our Knowledge is of no use to us. And as these two, Inconsideration and Ignorance, are near a-kin to one another, so in a little Time they

grow

grow perfectly one and the same; for the not considering of Truth, quickly brings on a total Oblivion and Forgetfulness of it, which is one and the same Thing with Ignorance.

2. A *Second* Way whereby we obscure our spiritual Light, is by living in Sin and Vice; notwithstanding the Knowledge of Things we may have in our Minds. Sins are called the Works of Darknes; and indeed they are such, not only because they who commit them are ashamed to own them; but likewise because they are so great Obstructors of that inward Light, which both illuminates, and cheers and comforts the Soul. The habitual Practice of Sin doth strangely darken the Mind, that it can't see the Way of Wisdom and Virtue. *For the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom, and a good Understanding have all they that do his Commandments*, Pſal. cxi. 10. And this is a Truth which every Man's Experience doth continually confirm. For our Lusts and Passions cloud the Understanding, divert the Attention, blot out good Ideas out of the Memory, weaken the Resolution, indispose us for Prayer and the Study of the Holy Scriptures, and the Use of all the other Means of Grace, and consequently shut up the Magazines of Heaven; in short, they make the Man carnal; that his principal Design and Endeavour is to gratify his carnal Appetites, and to indulge the Itch of Lust and sinful Pleasure. So that both from the Nature of the Thing, and the just Judgment of God, the Talent of divine Light is taken away from him who wraps it up in a Napkin, and makes no use of it. This is so true an Observation, that wicked Living obscures our Light, and dims the Candle.

Candle both of natural Knowledge and divine Grace, that it is daily to be seen, Men of atheistical Opinions are commonly brought to that horrid State by the Wickedness of their Lives. For it being exceeding uneasy for Men to have their own Minds continually contradict and condemn their Practice, this obliges them either to amend their Lives, or to alter their Opinions; and if they can't forbear their wicked Practices, and bring up their Lives to their good Principles, they commonly bring down their good Principles to their wicked Lives; and their Candle is quite extinguished in the Darknes of Atheism and Infidelity.

There is another Way too whereby a sinful Course obscures our Candle, that it can't shine bright to others; by prejudicing and prepossessing them against all the good we might otherwise be capable of doing them. And this likewise is very natural; for how can we think Men will believe us to be in earnest, when they see us act quite contrary to our own Precepts and Advices? And this will hold not only between Pastors and their Flocks, but in all other Relations. That Parent who exhorts his Son, and that Master who exhorts his Scholar, tho' never so eloquently, to beware of Passion, of Cursing, Swearing, or Railing, his Exhortations, tho' never so earnest, will avail little, if he acts continually contrary to his own Precepts. His bad Example will hinder the Operation of his Precepts and Rhetorick too; and so it is in all other Virtues and Vices. And therefore if we intend not to hide our Candle under a Bushel, we must take care to add good Example to good Instruction; shewing by our
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Practice, as well as directing by our Precepts, what manner of Persons Men ought to be.

3. A *Third* Way whereby we hide our Candle under a Bushel is, by neglecting to communicate our Knowledge, in our several Stations, to others, who might be the better for it. We are all of us very much wanting to our Duty in this Respect, and too much hampered and restrained by the Customs of the World, that we do not so much as endeavour to keep Men from running headlong into Sin and Perdition. More particularly, it can never be enough lamented, that in the tender Years of Children, when they are capable of being moulded into any Shape, and of receiving any Form and Impression, they are then commonly let alone to themselves, and their own natural Wildness; and that there is not more Pains taken to *train up a Child in the Way wherein he ought to go, that when he is old he may not depart from it.* It is much to be lamented too, that the mutual Conversations of Christians one with another, are not more savoury and edifying, that instead of spending the Time in Trifles, or worse, they do not endeavour to instil right Notions, and to stir up one another to a Life and Actions more suitable to the Spirit of Christianity. And as this is much wanting in private Christians, it is much more so in Persons who by their Prudence, Age, Office, or Authority, have a greater Right and Advantage to advise, command, or direct others; or a greater Interest in them, or Power over them. And especially it is most of all to be lamented, that in many Points the Maxims and Customs of the World are set up directly opposite to those of the Gospel, and have
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got such an Head, that few have the Courage to stem the Tide, and to withstand the Torrent of them. There is certainly a Degree of Resolution and Courage much wanting upon such Occasions. Let us remember and act upon those two Sayings of our Saviour; *Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven*, Mat. x. 32. And *whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the holy Angels*, Mark viii. 38.

So much for the *First* Thing I proposed to consider, namely, what way we may be said to suppress our Light, or to hide our Candle under a Bushel.

II. The *other* Head of Discourse I proposed from the Words was, to consider how Christians are to hold out this their Light in the most publick Manner, and to the greatest Advantage; *to set their Candle on a Candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the House*.

This Candle so lighted, and set up to the best Advantage, I apprehend may consist of the following Particulars. 1. An open Profession of Christianity. 2. An exemplary Life. 3. Courageous Suffering. 4. Freedom from Scandal. 5. Indefatigable Diligence, and, 6. Good Discipline; particularly a Freedom of Admonition and Reproof. And all this not in one or two, but generally in the whole Body of Christians. Let us consider these Things a little more particularly.

I. The *First* I named was, *an open Profession of Christianity*. Now tho' we, who live in the more

peaceable Times and Parts of the Church, can hardly apprehend where the great Virtue of a Christian Profession lay; yet had we lived in those turbulent Times, when all the Powers upon Earth, Civil and Ecclesiastical, combined to deter Mankind from the Profession of the Christian Faith, we must have confessed that it required a great Degree of Self-denial, and of Courage and Resolution, for Men publickly to own themselves to be Christians. For it imported no less in those Days than a Resolution and Readiness for *Martyrdom*. And what great Virtues concurred to this Temper of Mind, I shall not now offer to describe, having consider'd it so lately from the last Beatitude, and having shewed you likewise how our blessed Lord thought fit to encourage it with the Promise of a high Degree in Glory. But what we are now upon is, that this same bold Profession made Christians very singular, conspicuous and remarkable, that with an invincible Courage they shewed how they feared God more than Man, and valued the Command of their Saviour more than all that Men could do unto them. This must needs attract the Observation, and stir up the Wonder of all Men, to find a Body of People, that from a Belief of the Rewards of another Life, were above the Hopes and Fears of this.

2. Especially, if they observed further, that this Profession was attended with a most Bright and *Exemplary Life and Conversation*, such as the World had never seen before. Such a Piety towards God, such a Charity to Men, such a Self-denial in themselves, such a brotherly Love towards one another, such a firm Belief of future
Glory;

Glory; and under the vast Endowments they were qualified with, no less than that of working Miracles, yet such a profound Humility, that not one of them ascribed any Thing to himself, but did all in the Name of Christ, and gave him the Praise and Glory of all.

3. A *Third* Thing which gave a great Lustre to their Doctrine, and set it off with the greatest Advantage, was the *Patience, Constancy, and Resoluteness of their Suffering*. I speak not now only of their Courage in venturing Death for their Profession, and that under all the most terrible Shapes of lingring Tortures that could be contrived; but on the Manner in which they suffer'd it, with that Meekness, and Patience, and Constancy, and Joy, with that Love for their very Enemies and Persecutors, that they died praying and pleading for them, after the Example of their Lord, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luke xxiii. 34. Certainly the World could not look upon these Things to be natural; Flesh and Blood inclines to retaliate Injuries; and every Creature thinks it has a Right of Self-Preservation; but the Laws of their Religion, and their Faith in God, and lively Hope of Happiness in a future State, taught them such Principles of Patience and Charity, as the World had never seen before.

4. Add in the *Fourth* Place, that all these glorious Virtues were not in the least sullied with any publick Blemish or Scandal. Any one notorious Fault indeed doth strangely obscure and darken the Light of a great many Virtues; as the Wise Man observes, that *as dead Flies cause the Ointment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking*

Savour, so doth a little Folly him that is in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour, Eccl. x. 1. The World is so envious, censorious, and uncharitable, that they are glad to spy out any Fault in a good Man; and if they can find any such, they make more Use of it to lessen and disparage him, than of all his other Virtues to set him off and commend him. But such was the bright Example of the first and best Christians, that Envy itself could find nothing to censure in their Lives; or if through Envy wicked Men happened to out with any Censures, there was so little real Ground to support them, that they fell of themselves; and their Adversaries were ashamed of their own groundless and unjustifiable Calumnies: as St. Peter says, 1 Pet. iii. 16. Having a good Conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good Conversation in Christ. He goes upon the same Notion in the i^{id} Chapter of that Epistle, ver. 12. where he advises them to live so inoffensively among the Gentiles, that if any should accuse them as Evil-doers, these very Persons, when the Business should come to be inspected, might be convinced of their Error, and glorify God on their Account. Having your Conversation honest (or clear and honourable) among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as Evil-doers, they may by your good Works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation. For this Reason it was, they were so careful that all among them should do their Duty without Reproach, even to the meanest Servant, that no Dishonour might by their Misbehaviour be fixed on their Religion; as we may see from St. Paul's Exhortation concerning

ing Servants, *Tit. ii. 9. Exhort Servants*, says he, *to be obedient unto their own Masters, and to please them well in all Things; not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good Fidelity; that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.*

5. A *Fifth* Thing which set off the Light of Christians to Advantage, was their *extraordinary Diligence*. The wonderful Zeal they shewed in their Master's Service, drew as much the Eyes of the Spectators, as any Thing whatsoever. They were not like the indifferent, lukewarm Christians now-a-days, who are almost like *Gallio*, that cared for none of those Things; but they were like Men who minded it as the *one Thing needful*, and as a Thing which they believed would turn to good Account in the End: According to the Advice of the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, who commending them for their Work and Labour of Love, exhorts them to *shew the same Diligence, to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End*; and that *they should not be slothful, but Followers of them who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises*, Heb. vi. 12. Ours are but dim Lights in Comparison of theirs. They were *burning and shining Lights*, as our Saviour said of *John the Baptist*; burning with Zeal, and shining by the Brightness of their Doctrine and Life. This was to place their Candle to the best Advantage, and to keep it well trimmed and snuffed, that it might give a bright Light to all Beholders.

6. A *Sixth* and last Thing I shall mention, as that which set them off with the greatest Lustre, was the Exactness of their Discipline, managed by such skilful Pastors as the Apostles were, and

obey'd by a People that had the greatest, I add, and justest Veneration for their Pastors that ever People had. No Hypocrite durst intrude into that sacred Society. The Example of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* convinced the World, that the Apostles could detect an Hypocrite; this, with the little, or rather no Encouragement there was in those Days to dissemble the Profession of Christianity; if they did not really believe the Doctrine, kept the Church in the Hands of sincere Believers; and if any one of them was found in any publick Fault, he was sure to be publicly rebuked, that others also might fear. And besides these publick Rebukes, they failed not *to exhort one another daily, lest any of them should have been hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.* So that there were always a great many ready and watchful to trim the Lamps, and snuff the Candles, and to take Care that they should give their Light to the best Advantage.

To all which if we add, that this bright shining by holy Life and Doctrine not being particular to one or two, but common to the whole Christian Church, this was like a Room full of Lights, which, joining their Splendor together, made one great Illumination, and so gave full Light to all that were in the House.

O glorious Times, in comparison of ours, where there is but here and there a dim Light burning; and the rest are either never lighted at all, or gone out in a Stink. The Purport of all is, that we endeavour both to have Light in ourselves, and take care to communicate it in the best Manner to others. A terrible Doctrine to them, who, instead of being Ornaments, are a Scandal and Disgrace to their Profession; and who, instead of trim-

trimming their Lamps, that they may shine out bright in all the Splendor and Beauty of a Christian Conversation, endeavour rather to extinguish the little Light they have from good Education, and the Principles of natural Conscience, that they may the more freely, and without Controul, follow their vicious and unjust Inclinations. Let us endeavour in these degenerate Times to do something for the Honour of Christianity, and of our blessed Lord and Master Christ Jesus, whose Disciples and Servants we profess ourselves to be. We shall find in the end it will prove our own best Interest, when all worldly Comforts fail, and we must bid an eternal Adieu both to our Estates and Projects.

God give us all Grace to consider in this our Day, the Things which belong to our everlasting Peace, before the Time come that they be hid from our Eyes. And to this great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, Honour, and Glory, Might, Power, and Dominion, for ever and ever.

S E R M O N XXIX.

M A T. V. 16.

Ver. 16. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.*

The Sixth Sermon on this Text.

FOR our better apprehending the Scope and Design of these Words, it will be necessary to remember, how in the two foregoing Verses our Lord had compared Christians to *the Light of the World* in general; and more particularly to *a City set on an Hill* for their Conspicuity; and to *a Candle in a Candlestick*, for the Advantage of giving Light to all in the House. The Words I have now read contain the Use or Application of these Similitudes: *Let your Light so shine before Men, &c.* q. d. “ Ye are not
 “ only to endeavour to be good Men in secret
 “ yourselves, but are to have a great Regard to
 “ others; and are so to order your Conversations,
 “ that from them they may be struck with Ad-
 “ miration and Love of your Example, and so
 “ reclaimed from a vicious, to a godly and virtu-
 “ ous Course; which is the greatest Honour and
 “ Service they can do to Almighty God.” But
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for our fuller and better understanding the Words, it will be necessary to explain some of the Expressions in the Text, particularly these following :

1. What is meant by *the Shining of our Light before Men*.

2. What Sort of *good Works* are here meant and recommended.

3. What is to be understood by *letting Men see our good Works* ; and how that is to be distinguished from Vanity and Ostentation.

4. What is meant here, by *Glorifying our Father which is in Heaven*.

1. *First* then, what is meant by *the Shining of our Light before Men* ? As to this, considering how it has Reference to the preceding Similitudes of *the Light of the World, a City on an Hill, and a Candle in a Candlestick*, and how it is explained here by *Men's seeing our good Works* ; all this, I say, being considered, by this *Shining of our Light before Men*, there seems to me to be nothing else meant, but that we should take Care to give a clear, good Example, such as may be very conspicuous for the Brightness of it to the World.

2. The *Second* Thing to be explained in the Text, is what Sort of *good Works* are here recommended. All the Light we have into this Matter from the Words is, that the good Works are to be visible ; that they are to give a great Splendor or Lustre ; that they are to convey a lovely Character of the Christian Religion to the Beholders, so as to glorify God, by stirring up their Praises of him, and by bringing them over to the Christian Profession and Practice. From
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all which we may gather these Observations concerning *the good Works* here mentioned. 1. That they are such Works as the very Heathen reckon'd good, that is, good Works so esteemed of by the Light of Nature, and had in Repute with all Men. By which Character I judge our Saviour in this Passage meant, not so much those additional Duties, which Christianity has superadded to the Law of Nature, such as Faith, Baptism, Communicating, and the like, of which the Heathen knew nothing; as Works of Beneficence, Charity, Patience, Fortitude, and other noted Virtues, that might recommend them to the Esteem of the Heathen. 2. That they are to be visible good Works, *that they may see your good Works*, says the Text. From this Character of them I gather, that the Works here meant, are not so much the secret Duties of Devotion, which the World was not to see; as the more Publick, Visible, and Creditable Parts of Duty. And this Notion suits with the Original Word, *καλά ἔργα*, which is something more than *ἀγαθὰ ἔργα*. This last signifies barely *good Works*; but the other, which is the Word in the Text, signifies both *good* and *honourable, or creditable Works*. 3. From the Splendidness of these good Works, apt to strike upon the Admiration of the Beholders, I gather that it is meant there should be something that is not common or ordinary in these Works, but that either in the Nature, or Number, or in the other Circumstances of them, there be something very admirable, and extraordinary lovely to the Beholders.

3. The *Third Thing* to be explained in the Words is, what we are to mean by exposing our
good

good Works to the Sight of Men ; and how to clear this from *Vanity* and *Ostentation*. Now we need not go far for an Answer of this Doubt, the Context furnishing us with two very proper Answers to it. 1. One is, that this *Shining of our Light before Men*, *that they may see our good Works*, is not to set forth our Glory, but God's. It is this noble End set before us, which alters the Nature of the Action from a Vain, to a Religious one. 2. This exposing of our good Works to the Sight of Men, is in order to encourage their Imitation, and so to do them good. Now the setting two such noble Ends before our Eyes, as the Glory of God, and the Good of Men, is the best Preservative against Affectation and Vain-Glory.

4. The last Thing I proposed to explain is, what is to be meant by *the Glorifying our Father which is in Heaven* ; that is, the glorifying God. He is elegantly called *our Father in Heaven* ; for as Children resemble their Parents, so Christians by good Works resemble God. Now Glorifying God, I take to be briefly the honouring of God ; whatever manner of Way that Honour is performed : whether by obeying his Laws, or by paying Acts of Devotion, especially Praise and Adoration to him ; or by gaining others to his Service and Obedience ; or, in short, by doing any Thing whereby God may be honoured in his Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, or any other of his Attributes. The plain Meaning of the Expression in this Place seems to be this ; q. d. Give so good an Example, that all Men may have Reason to bless God on your Account, and may be induced to become such Men themselves.

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From the Words thus explained, there are these *three* Things do offer themselves to our Consideration, as the Scope and Design of them.

I. That it is the Duty of Christians to live most Exemplary Lives, eminent for all Manner of good Works.

II. That in so doing, they ought not only to have regard to God, so as to keep a good Conscience toward him; but to have regard likewise to Men, that they may be made better by their good Example.

III. That as to the Praise and Honour of this good Example, we are to have a special Care both to design and contrive it so, that it may not terminate in ourselves, but in God, our heavenly Father.

These are all directly contained in the Words; and are Truths of the greatest Consequence; and therefore I hope ye will afford them a suitable Degree of Attention and Consideration.

I. I begin with the *First*, (which I suppose will be enough for our present Meditation,) that it is the Duty of Christians to live most Exemplary Lives, eminent for all Manner of good Works. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works.* If it is to be a Light; and a shining Light; and so splendid that the careless World, which commonly minds none of these Things, shall see it, and take notice of it, so far as to glorify God for it; then certainly it must be an eminent Example for good Works. And here it might be
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of good Use to enquire more particularly into these *two* Things; what sort of good Example our Saviour expected of Christians beyond other Men, and what particular Obligations they are under to afford it.

1. *First* then, let us enquire what sort of good Example this was, our Saviour required of his Disciples, that is, of *Christians*, beyond other Men. It is plain from the Words, it was no common Example he designed, but such as should draw the Observation of the World. Christians were to be quite another sort of Men than the rest of Mankind; they were to carry all Duty to a greater Height; and to give the World such Examples of Virtue, as they never saw before. More particularly, I shall mention four or five Things that distinguished the good Example of Christians from that of all other Men. 1. As to Personal Virtues, the great and visible Change in their Lives. 2. The invincible Patience of their Sufferings. 3. The Uprightness and Exactness of their Dealings. 4. Their wonderful Love and Friendship to one another. 5. The good Order and Discipline of their whole Body. Things that deserve a more particular Consideration.

(1.) As to their Personal Virtues, the great and visible Change in their Lives. It is no such strange Thing to see Persons, who have been blessed with a religious good Education, abstain from gross Vices; *Solomon's* Observation being generally true, that *if we train up a Child in the Way wherein he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it*, Prov. xxii. 6. But for Men habituated to ill Courses, all of a sudden to change
 . them,

them, and hold it ; for Drunkards to become remarkably sober ; Fornicators and Adulterers, Pure and Chaste ; Knavish, Dishonest Men, Just and Charitable ; Profane Atheistical Men, Pious and Devout ; for such a visible and remarkable Change to be made purely by the wonderful Operation of the Spirit of God, and the Principles of their Religion, this was a Thing that must needs command the Attention and the Observation of the Beholders. And this was the Case with the Christians, as St. Paul informs us, 1. Cor. vi. 11. Where having acquainted them that *the Unrighteous should not inherit the Kingdom of God ; and particularly, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners* : he adds, *and such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c.* And so Eph. ii. 1. *And you hath he quickned, saith the Apostle, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins, wherein in time past, ye walked according to the Course of this World.* And so in several other Passages of Scripture. Nor would the Thing have been so wonderful, if with some Sectaries and Enthusiasts among ourselves, they had only made a little outward Change ; such as changing the Vanity of Apparel for a more spiritual Pride ; and Prodigality for Covetousness ; and Cursing and Swearing for Censoriousness and Moroseness : but they gave all the clearest Proofs of their being entirely renewed in the Spirit of their Minds ; and were not more remarkable for any thing, than their Meekness and Humility, their Condescension and Charity, their Heavenly-minded-

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ness and Self-denial, which adorned their Conversation; and especially their loving and forgiving Behaviour towards their Enemies, in which they shewed that they imitated their Father in Heaven.

And as their Example was thus bright as to the Practice of all Virtue, it was no less illustrious by a careful abstaining from Vice: according to the Exhortation of St. Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 15. *Let none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an evil Doer, or as a busy Body in other Mens Matters.*

It was likewise adorned by a Practice of all the Rules of Prudence; by abstaining even from all Appearance of Evil; by giving so little Offence, that their good Actions and Intentions might not be mis-interpreted and evil spoken of; and by joining with all the commendable and laudable Customs of the Time and Place, Phil. iv. 8. *Whatsoever Things were true, honest, just, pure, friendly, of good Report, if there was any Virtue, or any Praise*, these were the Things recommended to their Consideration and Practice. And particularly, that they should carry themselves decently towards them that are without, and that they should have lack of nothing, 1 Thess. iv. 12. i. e. have no Occasion to put the World to any Manner of Trouble or Charge.

(2.) Next to the great and visible Change in their Lives, there was nothing wherein their Light shined brighter beyond that of other Men, than in the Patience of their Sufferings. That was undoubtedly a Thing which must needs draw the Observation of the Beholders, to see Men chearfully venture their *All* in this World, even
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Life itself, for the Hopes of an unseen Happiness ; and exercise all the Graces of the Cross with an exemplary Patience, Resignation and Courage ; and by that Means acquiring a Constancy and Perseverance not to be shaken or overcome.

(3.) A *Third* Thing which made the Example of Christians so splendid, was the Uprightness and Exactness of their Dealings ; in which matter they were governed by a Rule their Master had set them, much more exact than all the Rules of Law and Equity which had ever been given to the World before. It was this ; *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*, Mat. vii. 12. This one Rule made Christians keep a good Conscience in all their Transactions with Men. This made gentle Masters, honest and obedient Servants, kind Parents, dutiful Children, moderate Magistrates, and loyal Subjects ; this brought in a Simplicity, Honesty and good Conscience into all Dealings, instead of that Trickiness, Equivocation, Oppression, and Exaction, which the World had been used to before ; and made no small Distinction between Christians and other Men : and brought no small Reputation to the Christian Religion.

(4.) A *Fourth* Thing which made the Example of Christians so splendid, was that wonderful Friendship, or *Brotherly Love*, for which they were so remarkable towards one another. A Friendship, such as the World never saw before, which united their Hearts, Pens, Interests, Purses and Estates, to that Degree, that they wanted for nothing of this World's Comforts ; which being joined with that of a good Conscience, and their firm Expectations of Happiness

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in a future State, made all their Sufferings chearful and easy.

(5.) The *Fifth* Thing I observe in their good Example, is the good Order and Discipline of the whole Body of the Christian Church. A Discipline which kept out ill People from among them, and so left them in a beautiful and comely Condition, like a Garden well cleaned from Weeds, where the remaining Flowers and Plants shew themselves in their native Beauty and Order.

So much for the Description of the good Example our Saviour required and expected of Christians.

2. Let us *next* enquire, as we proposed, why Christians are obliged to this Exemplary Behaviour beyond other Men? I answer briefly, because they have the best Directions, the best Examples, the greatest Encouragements, the best Assistance, and the greatest Obligations of Gratitude; and, in short, because a holy Life is so interwoven with their Religion, that it is truly a *Mystery of Godliness*. And therefore they are no further skilled in their Profession, than they learn to give a good Example as to their Life and Conversation. I shall be but brief upon these Things, because I would not willingly overcharge your Memories, or trespass upon your Patience.

(1.) *First* then, Christians are obliged to give a better Example than other People, because they have their Duty much better explained to them, than ever any other Men had. It were an endless Task to reckon up the Errors of the wisest of the Heathens in the Matter of Morals; and even the Truths they hit upon were but conjectural, so that it is no wonder if the Light of their Example

could not shine much, when that of their Doctrine was so obscure. The Morals of the Law of *Moses* did far exceed theirs; and yet, as our Saviour told the *Jews*, there were several Things indulged them because of the Hardness of their Hearts, and many Precepts were given them, not because they were best in themselves, but because they best suited that carnal People. And even the good Precepts they had were perverted by their Doctors as to their Sense; which is both vindicated by the Doctrine of Christ; and many much more perfect Precepts superadded, which teach us our Duty to much greater Perfection.

(2.) Another Obligation we Christians lie under to an Exemplary good Life, beyond that of other Men, is the mighty Advantage we have from the Example of Christ, and likewise of diverse eminent Christians, beyond any Examples the World ever had before. As to the Example of Christ himself, I have at another Opportunity shewed the great Advantage of it, and recommended the Duty of Imitation of him; and therefore shall not now say any Thing about it; but there is likewise a great Advantage in having the Examples of so many Apostles, and Saints, and Martyrs, and Confessors before us, to encourage us to our Duty; for it is very considerable what our Saviour saith to this Purpose, speaking of *John the Baptist*, and comparing him with the old Prophets, *Mat. xi. 11. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of Women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he, i. e. the least of the Evangelical Prophets is greater than he.* And if so, we have

have a great many Examples to follow, of greater Men, Men of greater Gifts, and greater Performances, than any that were under the Law.

(3.) We are obliged to give the best Examples, because we have the greatest Encouragements. The Promises of the Gospel are justly called *exceeding great and precious Promises*; for *Life and Immortality is brought to Light by the Gospel*. 2 Tim. i. 10. And all other Spiritual Blessings are plentifully poured out through the Mediation of Christ Jesus; and all Temporal Blessings are likewise promised to be added unto us; and why should not we add too, among the Encouragements, the New Covenant itself with all its gracious Terms; where Sincerity is accepted instead of Perfection; Repentance instead of Innocence; Grace is granted upon asking in Christ's Name; and the Improvement of our Talents, upon the right Use of what we have? So that there is nothing wanting in Point of Encouragement.

(4.) We have the greatest Assistance from the best Means of Grace; the Word, the Sacraments, Prayer, the Holy Spirit ready to assist our Infirmities, a Blessed, Meritorious, All-sufficient Mediator and Intercessor at the Father's Right Hand, a standing Ministry in the Church; all Things fitted and contrived to enable us to live up to our holy Profession, and to shine as Lights in the World.

(5.) We have the greatest Obligations to holy Practice and good Example from Gratitude, that ever any Men had. For *we are redeemed not with Silver and Gold from our vain Conversation, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Spot and Blemish*, 1 Pet. i. 18. We have

been treated with the greatest Mercy and Goodness, and long-suffering Patience; no Advantage has been taken of our frequent Lapses and Relapses into sinful Courses; we have been allowed both Time for Repentance, and Means of Grace, and Opportunities for Well-doing; we have had many Advantages of being well instructed in the Knowledge of our Duty, and of being excited to the Performance of it; God's Holy Spirit has suggested to us many good Thoughts and Desires, and our own Consciences have often proved faithful Monitors: We have innumerable Obligations to Almighty God for all the Blessings we enjoy at present, and all we hope for hereafter. And what is the Design and Tendency of all he requires of us? The Design of all is, only to make us happy. So that if we are to be wrought upon from Principles of Gratitude and Ingenuity, we lie under mighty Obligations to be Good, and to do Good, and to shine forth by good Example in the World.

(6.) *Lastly*, The whole Business of the Christian Religion is *a Mystery of Godliness*. It is the very Design of all that Christ has done and suffered for us, to make us first Holy, then Happy. All the Parts of our Religion have a direct Tendency this Way; and we are no further true and genuine Disciples of Christ, than as we fall in with this Design, and study to promote Holiness in ourselves and others; as might be shewed from a Multitude of Passages of the New Testament, if it were not now Time to draw to a Conclusion. I shall only leave with you one famous Passage to this Purpose, *Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14 The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all Men;*

XXIX.] *to shine before Men, Mat. V. 16.* 485

Men; teaching us that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. This is the same Thing with my Text taken out of the Metaphor; the denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, is the breaking through and dispelling the Clouds; the living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, and the being zealous for good Works, is the letting our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

So much for the *First* Thing I proposed to consider from the Words, that it is the Duty of Christians to live most Exemplary good Lives, eminent for all Manner of good Works. The other two Points I have not now Time to enter upon, and shall therefore refer them to another Opportunity. Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

S E R M O N X X X .

M A T. V. 16.

Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

The Seventh Sermon on this Text.

IN a former Discourse on these Words, after I had explained the Terms, there were *Three* Things I proposed to consider from them, as being the Scope and Design of our Saviour, in this Passage of his Sermon on the Mount.

I. That it is the Duty of us Christians to live exemplary Lives, eminent for all manner of good Works.

II. That in so doing we ought not only to have Regard to God, so as to keep a good Conscience toward him; but to have Regard likewise to Men, that they may be made better by our good Example.

III. That as to the Praise and Honour of this good Example, we are to have a special Care both to design and contrive it so, that it may not terminate in ourselves, but in God our Heavenly Father.

Now

Now having at the last Occasion spoke to the *First* of these, (at least as far as Time would permit) that it is the Duty of Christians to live Exemplary Lives, eminent for all manner of good Works; I proceed now to the *Second*, which is, That in doing our good Works, we ought not only to have Regard to God, so as to keep a good Conscience toward him; but to have Regard likewise to Men, that they may be made better by our good Example. *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Where it is plain, the Good Works are to be contrived to be Publick and Exemplary on Purpose that Men may see them, and take notice of them; and be excited by them to glorify God. The Glory of God indeed is the ultimate End we ought to propose to ourselves in our good Actions; but the Edification of Men is a subordinate End; and likewise has a direct Tendency to the Glory of God, which is the ultimate End. Now that I may handle this Part of our Duty more distinctly, I shall comprehend it in these Two. 1. I will a little further consider the Act of being Exemplary in good Works. And 2. the View or Aim we are to have in this Act, namely, the Good of Others, that they may be duly affected with this good Example, so as to be excited to glorify God thereby.

(1.) I will a little further consider the Act of being Exemplary in good Works. And *First*, as to Good Works.

That there is a natural Distinction between Good and Evil; and that the very Heathen World

understood what was meant by Good Works, is plain from all their Writings; and our Lord's Discourse here doth suppose it. And indeed I believe there is scarce any People to be found so Barbarous, but what in their own Minds set a Value on Truth and Honesty, on Mercy and Charity, on Kindness and Humanity, on Temperance and Diligence, and the like, before the contrary Vices of Falshood, Knavery, Cruelty, Hard-heartedness, Pride and Passion, Slothfulness and Drunkenness. It's true indeed this Distinction between Good and Evil, is both scanty and obscure by the Light of Nature, to what it is by the Laws of the Gospel. But this is to be said further in Commendation of the Light of Nature upon this Subject of Good Works, that tho' there are many excellent Things, which it could not find out of itself, yet when found out to its Hand, it can't help seeing the Beauty of them, and admiring the Persons who practise them, and the Institution which gives so good Precepts and Directions; and of this Nature are most of the Duties of the Christian Religion; such good Things as the World had either no Notion, or very imperfect Notions of before, which yet when they come to be understood, and put in Practice, and especially in that most perfect Manner Christ has enjoined, do wonderfully recommend themselves to the Approbation, Love and Esteem of Mankind. For, tho' there always were, and always will be such Men in the World, as do not approve of good Works by their own Practice and Example; there are scarce any Men so much depraved in their Judgments, but that they know in general that a Virtuous is far beyond a Vicious Practice;

as appears by this, that if they are never so knavish themselves, they would have their Factors and Correspondents, and all others that deal with them, to be just and honest; and if they are never so lewd and vicious themselves, they would be glad to have their Wives and Children and best Friends virtuous. We can't then be much to seek, what our Saviour meant by good Works; for no doubt he meant in general all such Works, as Men upon a good Use of their Faculties are apt to esteem and love. And if I were to condescend upon Particulars, I know not where I could find a better Collection of them, than in this same excellent Sermon on the Mount; where our Saviour beginning with removing the false Notions they had of the Messiah, and the wrong Dispositions of Mind and Practices of Life growing therefrom, lays the Foundation of the opposite Graces and Virtues in the eight Beatitudes; then clears the Moral Law from all the wrong Interpretations had been put upon it, and sets it off in its due Latitude and Extent of Duty; and especially shews how it was designed to govern the inner as well as the outward Man, and to be a Rule for our Thoughts as well as our Words and Actions. Then lastly, superadds several more special Gospel Duties, such as the Love of Enemies, Humility, Devotion, Fasting, Heavenly-mindedness, Charity, Candor in censuring, Importunity in Prayer, Strictness of Life and Conversation, and living up to the Laws of the Christian Profession. Here we have good Works enough taught by the best Master, and illustrated by the best Pattern.

Let us next enquire what is meant by being exemplary in good Works; for it is not a bare Glimmering of Light which is here recommended, but such a bright Sunshine of it as may excite the Attention and Admiration, and make deep Impressions in the Hearts of the Heathen World, in favour of the Christian Religion. But having said a good Deal of this Exemplariness from the first Point I handled from this Text at the last Occasion, I shall not now repeat, but add something of such Observations as may help further to illustrate this Matter.

1. *First* then, whereas other Religions were made up of a vast deal of Ceremony, and but a little of substantial Duty; the Christian Religion has this Advantage as to good Works, that it consists wholly of Substantial Duty, and little or no Ceremony. This Observation is so true of the Pagan Religions, that I shall not need to prove it; they turned all Religion into Pomp and Gaudiness, neglecting both the inward Purity of the Heart, and the external good Examples of Life. This *Persius*, one of their own Poets, complains of; and advises that instead of the Trinkets they offered to their Gods, they would offer a well composed, just, honest Mind, and a good Life. The *Jewish* Religion indeed was made up of both; there was a great Deal of good Morality in their Moral and Judicial Law, mixed with a great Heap of Ceremonies, which, for the Hardness of their Hearts, and to keep them from Idolatry, had been enjoined them. But they quickly found a Way to make the Ceremonial Part eat out the Moral; and instead of the Examples of good Life, to be a little more costly in the Number of
their

their Sacrifices, which they thought would make up the Business. This God by his Prophets often found fault with, shewing them that he valued the Example of a Good Life far before the Numbers and the Costliness of their Sacrifices. *To what Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats: Nay, he calls these Things vain Oblations, and Incense an Abomination, Isa. i. 13.* And then at the 16th ver. directs them to the proper Method, which was truly acceptable to him, *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow.* And then it follows immediately; *Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; tho' they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* Now can any one think otherwise, than that a Religion, which doth not give any Evasion to the Understanding, nor divert the Attention by Ceremonies, but directly requires the Substantials of Good Life and Practice, is more likely to abound in Examples of good Life, than a Religion which evaporates in Ceremonies, and consumes its Zeal in what has not the least Tendency to a good Life?

2. Especially, if we add in the next Place, that the Christian Religion not only gathers in our Zeal to the Substantials of Duty; but requires very high Measures of Care and Concernedness in all these Things; for it is not the little Matters

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of the Law, *the Tything of Mint, Aniſe and Cummin*; but the great Concerns of it, *Juſtice, Mercy, and Fidelity*, it chiefly inſiſts upon; nor is it *the Outside of the Cup and Platter*, but much more the *Inside*, it requires to be kept clean; not but that it calls for an outward Decency and Decorum as much as any Religion in the World; but this outward good Behaviour it requires to come from the Heart, and that there be nothing hypocritical or counterfeit in it, but all Sincere and Genuine. It requires a conſtant Eye to God and another World. It is not for compounding for a Neglect of ſome Duties by an over-Zeal in others; but requires a ſteady Regard to all God's Commandments; and that not in a low Degree, but with the moſt intent and diligent Care, that we ſhould love God with our whole Heart, and our Neighbour as ourſelves; that we ſhould in the *Fiſt* and principal Place *ſeek the Kingdom of God and the Righteouſneſs thereof*, and other Things but as *Acceſſories*; that we ſhould mind Religion as the *one Thing neceſſary*, and ſpend our Skill and Pains about it; like *St. Paul*, who exerciſed and trained himſelf in *this* as his main Buſineſs, *to keep a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God and Men*.

3. This was to be a very Bright Example, becauſe the Light of it was to ſhine all over the World at once, and was not to be confined to one Corner of it, as the Light of the Law of *Moſes* was. The Illumination was great, both in regard of the vaſt Number of Lights, Burning and Shining Lights that were ſet up; and in regard of the advantageous placing them in the moſt eminent Cities of the civilized World; and in
regard

regard of the wonderful Success they had in illuminating the dark Corners of the Earth, and banishing the Darknes of Superstition and Vice.

So much for the Act of being exemplary in good Works.

(2.) Let us next enquire into the View or Aim we are to have in this Act, namely, the Good of others, that they may be duly affected with this good Example, so as to be excited to glorify God thereby; *That they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* The Christian Institution doth not rest in the regulating of our External Actions; but proceeds to the directing of our Intentions aright in all those our Exemplary Actions. And two noble Intentions we are directed to here in the Text in all our good Examples. One is, the Good of our Neighbour; the other, the Glory of God. Instead of those worthless or base Motives Men commonly act by, Humour, Self-Interest, Hypocrisy, Vanity, Force of Education, Fear of Parents, Masters, or Magistrates, Fashion, Party, Imitation of others, the Importunity of Friends, the Emulation of Enemies, and many other Intrigues and Designs, which are not easy to be all observed or enumerated: Our Saviour directs us only to these two, the Good of our Neighbour, and the Glory of God. The Good of our Neighbour is what we are now upon under this Head. And it is a Thing which ought to be well considered. The World is full of Designs which Men carry on against one another; commonly to supplant their Neighbour, and to serve their own selfish and carnal Ends out of him. They have their Traps and
Snare,

Snares, and Arts and Instruments for that End; and most of their Wit and Parts, nay, most of their Learning and Skill in their several Arts, and Sciences, and Callings, is employed to this End. The Attacks and Defences of this Nature are the chief Employment of Mankind. Under all the Pretences of Friendships and Civilities, they are spreading their Nets for one another, and are sure to embrace every Advantage that presents. But how then! are we Christians to be void of all Aim and Design in our Actions? Are we to be so thoughtless and simple, as to act without any Intention? No, not so neither; we are to have Designs upon our Neighbour, but contrary to those of the World; Designs to do him good, to bring him to the Love of Virtue and Hatred of Vice; we are to consider his Circumstances as carefully as the worldly Man doth, and to contrive how, by ourselves or others, we may do him the most good; and are to lay such Traps in his Way, whereby he may be most gained to the Love of God and his Duty. These are the innocent Designs we are to have upon him. If ye ask me, what way all this is to be done? I answer, that it is a Work of that vast Extent, and takes in such a great Compass of Means; and these diversified according to the various Circumstances of our Neighbour, and of our own Talents, that it is no easy Matter to reduce them within any certain Rules; Stratagems here altering, as in War, upon the various Accidents of Time and Place, and our own, and the Enemies Circumstances. But apprehending, notwithstanding, that it may be a Thing of good Use to give some general good Directions, as to our Conduct in this Affair,

Affair, how to carry on our Designs upon our Neighbour to the best Advantage of his Soul; I shall adventure upon some of the plainest, and most general, and inoffensive to this Purpose.

1. *First then*, Let us endeavour to be always possessed with a sincere, good Intention, to do all the Good we can to our Neighbour. We find that whatever Intention or Desire is uppermost, or most prevalent in Men, the very Eagerness of the Intention makes them ingenious to find out Ways and Means to compass it. The Covetous Man, for Example, how fruitful an Invention has he in contriving several Ways and Arts of getting and saving? And if he happens to hear or read of any Project, or Method, that tends to the carrying on of his Purposes, with what diligent Attention does he observe it? And with how faithful a Memory does he remember it? And how careful is he at last to try the Experiment, and put it in Practice? So if once we resolve with ourselves to carry on these Designs on Men for their Good, the very Strength and Eagerness of that Design will put us upon a thousand Inventions, to gain their Affections, and to find out the most commodious Times of Access, and to chuse the most winning Language and Behaviour, and to put them into the best Methods for Books, and Company, and Business, to carry on the Design, that can be.

2. Next to a good Intention, I know nothing more apt to gain upon Men, than that Spirit of Love and Charity, which is so much recommended in the Gospel. This puts us upon all those innocent Arts of gaining upon their Affections, and obliging them, which of all Things makes
them

them the most apt to open their Hearts to us, and receive Benefit by our Advices and good Examples. And here I can't but observe a singular Piece of good Providence of God to prepare the Way for the Reception of the Gospel; in that he gave a Power to the first Preachers and Propagators of it, to work a great many beneficial and obliging Miracles, by which the Hearts of People were first gained; and then their Understandings came to be enlightned. But it was not by their Miracles alone they gained so upon Mankind; we find a very obliging condescending Behaviour joined with their other Gifts, carefully avoiding the giving Offence either to the *Jews* or *Gentiles*, or to weak Christians. And this obliging Practice *St. Paul* frequently recommends to others, and tells us, that he followed it himself, *Rom. xv. 2. Let every one of us please his Neighbour for his good to Edification.* And *xiv. 19. Let us therefore follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another.* And there is a very notable Passage to this Purpose, *1 Cor. x. 31.* From whence it appears, that this was the chief Rule *St. Paul* walked by in his Eating and Drinking, and all other indifferent Matters. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, says he, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God: give no Offence neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all Men in all Things, not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of many that they may be saved.*

3. One of the surest, and most inoffensive Ways of gaining upon Mankind, is that of good Example. It is one of the readiest Ways both to inform the Judgment, and to please the Fancy, and to convince

convince the Understanding, and to make Impression on the Memory, and to excite our Zeal, and to provoke our Emulation, and to remove the Difficulties, by demonstration that good Things are feasible and practicable; it is one of the most real Ways of Argumentation, least subject to Delusion; and likewise one of the most silent and modest, and consequently the most taking; as Men are more taken with a modest, than with a talkative Beauty. And in short, this seems to be the Method chiefly recommended in my Text, that Men should be edified by *the Sight of our good Works*. But there is another Thing commonly goes along with this Sight, which usually makes a greater Impression; and that is, the Observing, and perhaps the real Feeling the good Effects of them, at least, the feeling of them by Sympathy in the Refreshments of others, if we have had no Occasion or Opportunity to be refreshed by them ourselves. Now this of Sense and Experience is a feeling Argument indeed; and enters deep, and makes very lasting Impressions.

4. If we would have our Aims to answer well to make Impression upon our Neighbour for his Edification, we must consider his particular Circumstances, that so we may find out which way he is best to be managed, and to be wrought upon to do good. *Let us consider one another to provoke unto Love, and to good Works*; says the Apostle, *Heb. x. 24*. All Men are not to be managed the same Way; therefore let us consider one another's particular Circumstances, and make use of them *to provoke unto Love and good Works*. Sometimes the Dangers and Temptations the Person is immediately under, call for our Help, and direct

us to that Sort of good Works, which is most proper to be used to one in his Circumstances, and then the Seasonableness of this Kindness makes a wonderful Impression. Sometimes we must mind the Person's Humour and Temper, the *molliæ Tempora fandi*, the Times when he is most accessible, and fittest to receive good Impressions; sometimes we must mind his outward Circumstances, when God has blest him best in his Affairs, and then move him to Charity and good Works. Some Men are hard to be moved to do much of that Nature alone, who yet will act handsomely in Conjunction with others; and as some are easiest to be wrought upon in a Day of Rejoicing, so others in a Day of Grief and Affliction; then their Hearts have the tenderest Sense of Religion, and are most capable of Charitable Impressions. These few Instances are sufficient to convince us, that he who has Designs upon his Neighbour for his Good, must acquaint himself with his Heart and Life, and outward Circumstances, if he intends to make such advantageous Impressions upon him, as are necessary to stir him up to do much good.

5. There are many Means which God has left in his Church and in the World for promoting good Works; all which Means we should contrive, by our Example and Authority, in our several Stations, to countenance and encourage, and to discourage all the contrary Attempts: *e. g.* Are we convinced that a settled Ministry is a good Means, by the Blessing of God, to carry on the great Ends of the Gospel? Then let us countenance it where it is, and endeavour to set it up where it is wanting. Are we sensible that Sepa-

rations;

rations, Schisms, and Divisions, have a bad Influence upon Religion, and are a great Hindrance of our Progress in Christian Virtue? Then, according to the Apostle's Advice, *Heb. x. 25. Let us not forsake the Assembling of ourselves together, as the Manner of some is.* Are we sensible that the careful Institution of Children in the Fear of God is a great Help to their good Behaviour all their Life afterwards? Then let us encourage Schools, and the Fear of God in Families, and do what we can towards the good Education of all over whom we have any Power, Interest, or Authority.

6. Are we sensible that the Vigilance of Rulers and Magistrates, and a careful Execution of Laws, a Discouragement of Vice, and Encouragement of virtuous Persons, have a mighty Influence on the good Government of Mankind? Then let Magistrates learn to be diligent in the Execution of their Function, and to employ it to those good Ends; and let all People learn to honour and countenance Rulers and Magistrates for their Office Sake; to pray to God for them, and to yield them all due Obedience, and to have a Care how they join in with such disorderly People, as would bring in Anarchy and Confusion in Church or State.

Lastly, Towards the carrying on any good Design upon others, it is necessary that we take Care to preserve our own Minds in a good Frame and Temper; and likewise our Lives clear from all Blot and Scandal; there being nothing that will either more dispirit us in administering to others, or more hinder those others from receiving any Benefit from our Endeavours, than our own contradicting them in our Lives. And therefore let us count it one of the best Undertakings, to try

the Force of our Advices and Admonitions upon ourselves, before we can expect they will have much Influence upon others. And to all our other Endeavours, let us not fail to join that of our hearty and importunate Prayers at the Throne of Grace ; a Means, than which there is none better, either for drawing down a due Measure of Grace upon ourselves, or others to whom we administer the same.

I have been all this while discovering to you a great Secret of Christian Practice ; namely, what Aims and Intentions we ought to have in the good Examples we set before one another ; and I have been exhorting to Duties very much neglected, namely, instead of carrying on Designs to our Neighbour's Prejudice, to lay out our whole Skill in contriving his Edification, and thereby the Glory of God. And this would have led me to the *last* Thing I proposed to speak to from the Text ; namely, that as to the Praise and Honour of our good Works, we are to have a special Care to design and contrive it so, that it may not terminate in ourselves, but in God our Heavenly Father : But this, for want of Time, I must leave to another Opportunity.

God give us Grace to consider one another, that by all good Examples in Word and in Deed, we may *provoke unto Love and to good Works*. Now to this great God, &c.

S E R M O N XXXI.

M A T. V. 16.

Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

The Eighth Sermon on this Text.

NOT to Trouble you with Repetition of what has been formerly spoke from this Text; I shall only put you in mind of three great Truths which I observed, as the Scope and Design of it; *Two* of which I have already considered; so there remains only the *Third* to be spoke to.

1. I observed, that it is the Duty of us Christians to live exemplary Lives, eminent for all manner of good Works.

2. I observed that in doing our good Works we should not only have a Regard to God, so as to keep a good Conscience toward him; but have Regard likewise to Men, that they may be made better by our Example.

These two I have already dispatch'd, and proceed now to the

3d, and last; Namely, that as to the Praise and Honour of our good Works, or good Exam-

ples, we are to have a special Care to design and contrive it so, that it may not terminate in ourselves, but in God our Heavenly Father. That they may see *your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* That I may treat of this Part of the Text in some Order, I shall apply myself to the following Particulars.

I. To consider the Sin of Vanity or Self-seeking from our good Works, which our Saviour is here endeavouring to remedy and prevent.

II. To explain that ultimate Aim or View we ought to propose to ourselves in all our good Works, namely, the Glorifying of God.

III. I will more particularly consider the Reasonableness of this Doctrine. And;

IV. Lastly, will answer a Doubt or two which seem to lie against it.

I. *First* then, in order to our understanding the better, the Duty of glorifying God by our good Works, let us consider the contrary Sin of Vanity and Self-seeking. There is no Sin perhaps more apt to insinuate itself into our best Performances, and to marr all the Grace and Beauty of them, both in the Sight of God and Men. And there is really some Difficulty to know the just Bounds and Limits of our Duty in this particular: for, on the one Hand, it seems hard to restrain us from all inward Complacency and Satisfaction in our best Works; something of this being necessary to stir Men up to do good; and perhaps it is not culpable, if restrained within due bounds. On the other Hand, We find God very jealous of his Honour; which he has said he will

not give to another; and which we find he has by some severe Examples vindicated, when Attempts have been made to deprive him of it. We have some great Instances of very eminent Men in Scripture History, who were exemplarily punished for this Crime, particularly *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Herod*; the one for being puffed up with his great Conquests, extensive Command, and stately Buildings and Palaces; and the other, for admitting and swallowing down the blasphemous Flattery given to his Rhetorick, and popular Favours. The Histories are known; I shall not dwell upon them. There are many other besides them, who have vied Honour with God; as the Giants, who attempted to build the Tower of *Babel*; *Pharaoh*, who stood it out with God Almighty, and would not let the People of *Israel* go; even *David*, in numbering the People; and many more might be produced as Instances of Pride and Vanity, severely vindicated by Almighty God. It behoves us then to enquire diligently into the Nature of this Sin of Self-conceit and Vanity, and of the contrary Duty of Glorifying God, that we may be sure to avoid the one, and intend the other, in all our good Actions. And as to this, I know no shorter Rule than to consider ourselves in all our good Works, purely as Instruments in God's Hand; as his Servants and Agents, and as doing his Work in Obedience to his Precepts; and entrusted with his Talents; but as really nothing in ourselves without him. And therefore the Setting up, as it were, for ourselves; the carrying on an independent Interest, as if what we had were our own, this is the Crime; and a very provoking and grievous Crime it is.

To illustrate it with a familiar Similitude; if a rich Owner should build a stately Ship, and load her with a rich Cargo of diverse Sorts of Goods, and entrust this Ship and Cargo to any never so skilful Master, giving him Instructions what Voyage to make, and how to dispose of the Goods to his best Advantage, out of all which nothing was to come to the Master, but his Wages and Commision; if instead of this, he should contrive to run away with the Ship and Cargo to a far distant Port from that to which he is directed; and there dispose of them, not for the Owner's, but for his own Account and Interest; and then purchase an Estate, and live high upon the Money; without the least Symptom or Expression of Gratitude; would not this base Design utterly depreciate the Skill and Diligence of this Master, were it ever so great? Would it not alter the Nature of all his Talents and Improvements; and make them, instead of the commendable Arts of an honest Man, to be only the Devices of a Knave, who has been all the while, not discharging his Trust to his Employer, but seeking his own base Ends thereby? This Similitude will help to discover to us the Nature of that Vanity and Self-seeking, which is proposed to be remedied by this Duty of Glorifying our heavenly Father in my Text. For all the Ability, and Capacity, and Opportunity we have to do any good; and all the Grace likewise we have to make use of them, are so many Talents entrusted to us by God Almighty, which we ought to lay out purely for his Honour; and we ought not to set up for any other Honour to ourselves, but in Subordination to his, the being his humble and faithful Servants,

and the using our best Endeavours to bring in Honour and Glory to him. And this leads me to the *Second* Thing I promised to consider; Namely,

II. The ultimate Aim we ought to propose to ourselves in all our good Works, which is, the Glory of God. Where I intend to speak of these three, *viz.*

1. The Design we are to set before our Eyes in all our good Works, *viz.* the Service and Honour of God.

2. The Manner of managing this Design, so as the Glory may really redound to God.

3. The Guard we are to set upon ourselves, both to beat down all Insurrections of Vanity, which may rise in our own Minds; and to keep out whatsoever of that Nature may be suggested by others.

I. *First* then, in all our good Works we should set the Service and Honour of God, as an express Design before our Eyes. To make this more intelligible, we are to consider, that in doing good Things, (I mean Things materially and externally good) Men have diverse Aims and Intentions. In some, all their good Actions proceed from a natural good Temper, which loves to make both the Person who is possessed of it, and all about him, easy, and to lay Obligations of Kindness on others. Some do good purely in Compliance with the Authority of Parents, Masters, Superior Officers, Rulers and Magistrates; or at the Intercession of Favourites, Friends, and Acquaintance. Some do good Things out of Civility and Complaisance; some out of Vanity and the Love of Applause; some from Covetousness

ness or Ambition; for Covetousness will put a Man upon such good Things as are saving and frugal; and Ambition will put him on the Practice of such good Things as are politick or popular. Some of our good Works are owing to the Spirit of a Party, and some to an Humour of Singularity, and a Spirit of Contradiction. And many of them are owing to crooked Designs, or to weak Principles of natural Pity, Shame or Fear. Instead of all these, the good Christian proposes to himself only the Honour of God, the Service of his Neighbour, and the Salvation of his own Soul. And these two last go always Hand in Hand with the first; for the Honour of God never drives one Way, and the true Service of our Neighbour, or the Salvation of our own Souls another.

If towards the ordering the Intention thus aright for the promoting God's Glory, ye should ask me which way ye may know whether a Thing tends to God's Glory or not? I answer briefly, that the Text speaks only of good Works, and of regulating the Intention aright as to them. Now to make any Work a good Work, it must be, 1. Lawful in itself. 2. Suitable to our Station and Circumstances in the World. 3. Designed for promoting something that is good for the Service of God, for the good of our Neighbour, or the Salvation of our own Souls. 4. Something within the Reach of our own Talents and Abilities. If it wants any of these Conditions, it can't be one of those good Works meant in my Text, that will bring Glory to God. For, 1. If it be unlawful, that is, contrary to any of God's Laws, tho' it have ever so plausible a Shew, and

and be designed ever so well for doing good, it is to be rejected as a Work of Darknes; and let the Aim and Intent of it be ever so good, it will never justify it before God; far less sanctify it as a Work for his Honour: for we must not do evil that good may come of it. And, 2. If it be not in the proper Sphere of our Station, it is a busying ourselves in other Mens Matters; which God thinks not at all for his Honour, who is a God of Order, not of Confusion. 3. The Aim and Design must be good, as well as the Means; it must be for promoting God's Service in the Salvation of the Souls of Men, either immediately, or something that has a Tendency there-to; by bringing up a good Report on Religion; by encouraging the Ministers of it; by discouraging Atheism, Vice, and Immorality; or by adorning the Doctrine of God our Saviour. 4. It must be something for which God has furnished us with sufficient Talents, Abilities, and Opportunities. For without these, we want the principal Thing that is necessary; namely, a Call from God to lay out ourselves in his Work and Service. But to return from this Digression, which yet has not been out of the Way of the Subject; it is not sufficient to have the Honour and Service of God before our Eyes; But,

2. We must likewise manage this Design in such a Manner, as that the Glory of it may really redound to Almighty God. It is a just Accusation of some of the *Jewish* Rulers, *John* v. 44. That they made it their Business *to receive Honour one of another, and did not seek the Honour which came from God only.* And *Chap.* xii. 43. that they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.

God. A quite contrary Character to this, is given of our Saviour's true Disciples and Apostles, *1 Thes. ii. 6. Nor of Men sought we Glory, says St. Paul, neither of you, not yet of others.* And it is very plain from their Manner of Acting, that they never pretended to set up for themselves, or for their own Fame and Glory, but for their Master. Did any of them offer to work a Miracle in his own Name? Was it not always in the Name of Christ? Did they ever assume the Honour to themselves? Was there not a constant Air of Humility and Modesty, of Disinterestedness and giving Glory to God, attended them in all the good Works they wrought? In them there was such a Guard of Humility, that instead of the Mens sounding the Trumpet, and proclaiming their own Works; it was the Works which proclaimed the Men, or rather the Praises of God who had given such Power unto Men.

3. As they took Care in the Manner of doing their good Works, to contrive them so, that all the Honour of them should come to God, so they were so much upon their Guard, (in which we are to imitate their Example) that they were always ready to beat down any Suggestions of Pride that might seem to rise, either in themselves, or to be suggested from others. It is very observable of *St. Paul*, that if ever he mentions any Thing to his own Advantage, as he is forced to do sometimes in his own Defence, he never fails to put in something to correct it, and to take away the Praise from himself, and give it to God. Thus, *1 Cor. xv. 8.* Giving an Account of the Honour bestowed upon him by God, in assuming him into the Number of the Apostles,
and

and in making him one of the Witnesses of Christ's Resurrection, he interlards this Relation with so many Turns of Humility, which he gives it, that it is plain he was afraid of every the least Tincture of Pride and Vanity. *Then, says he, he was seen of all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due Time.* Observe how he mixes his Election to the Apostleship and his Abortiveness together, that the Humility of the one, might qualify the Dignity of the other. Then he goes on, and being to speak of his great Diligence in the Apostolick Function, he takes care to usher it in both with a Depression of himself, and an Exaltation of the Grace of God; *for I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the Grace of God I am what I am.* Then follows the Account of his Diligence; *and his Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all:* which tho' it was very true; yet because it had a little Air of Vanity, he immediately corrects it; *Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me.* I know not how to give you a better Description of this Part of the Christian Spirit, than by laying before you such great Examples; and because I would make this Thing exceeding plain, I will venture on one Example more; I mean that of *Paul and Barnabas at Lystra*, Acts xiv. 8. Where, upon an eminent Cure wrought on a Cripple, who had been such from his Mother's Womb, the People giving the whole Honour of the Thing to them, blasphemously cried out in the Speech of *Lycaonia*; *The Gods are come down to us in the Likeness of Men.* And they

they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief Speaker. And the Priest of Jupiter brought Oxen and Garlands, and would have done Sacrifice with the People. But now behold with what Concern and Indignation they rejected all this Honour from themselves, and endeavoured to place it on God, the true and proper Object of it. For as soon as they heard what the People was about, they rent their Cloaths, and ran in among them, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these Things? We are also Men of like Passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these Vanities unto the living God, who made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all Things that are therein. By this Time now ye understand what it is so to contrive our good Works, that Men may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

III. I come now in the *Third Place* to offer something for the Proof and Confirmation of this Doctrine, by shewing the Reasonableness of it; that all our good Works should terminate, not in our Honour, but in God's. And for this I would briefly lay before you the following Considerations.

I. We ourselves are God's Servants in the doing of good. We do it by his Order, we follow his Direction in it. Now ye know what a Servant or Slave does by his Master's Order, it is by all Men reckoned more the Master's doing than his; especially, if we add to this Consideration, that we are so far from any Inclinations of ourselves to do good, that tho' our Master has pointed out to us the right Way, we are of ourselves exceeding averse from following it; and if our
Master

Master did not stand over us, and encourage us to it with Rewards on the one Hand, and deter us with Punishments on the other, and sometimes actually take us to Task, and chastise us for our Negligence, we should do no good at all.

2. Let it be considered, that all the Materials of our good Works, and likewise all the Ability, Skill and Dexterity to do them, is all from God; and therefore the chief Praise of them is due to him, and nothing left to us but that of being his Tools and Instruments. It is he that gives us both the Heads to contrive, and the Hands to work, and the Materials to work withal. It is home to this Purpose what *David* observes of his Own and the Peoples free Gifts towards the Building of the Temple, that we give nothing towards any pious or charitable Use but what was God's before. It was he that set us up, and gave us what we have; and it depends every Moment upon his Pleasure, to let us keep it, or to take it away from us. *O Lord our God, says David, 1 Chron. xxix. 16. All this Store which we have prepared to build thee an House for thy holy Name, cometh of thine Hand, and is all thine own.* This is the Notion good Men have of all they enjoy in this World, that it is all God's; that is, that it is the Effect of his Bounty to them, and that in Gratitude they owe it all to him again. It is the Language of unthankful Wretches, that all is their own. *Shall I take my Bread, and my Water, and my Flesh, that I have killed for my Shearers, and give it unto Men, whom I know not whence they be?* is the Language of a churlish *Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 11.* And that it is *their Power, and the*
Might

Might of their Hand, which gets them their Wealth, is the Language of a stubborn and unthankful People, *Deut. viii. 17.*

3. Let it be considered, that our good Works do not go out freely from ourselves, but that they are hired out by God's Bounty. He has by many Promises engaged himself to reward them. So that if our good Works had no other Relation to him, but as they are done with a Prospect of his Recompence of Reward, this is sufficient to entitle him to the Honour of them. As when a Prince or State hires Auxiliary Troops, they are entitled to all the Services such Troops perform, and have the principal Honour and Benefit of all the Victories they obtain.

4. The Honour of our good Works is principally due unto God, because it is wholly and solely due unto him that we perform them at all. If there were an Army, which, under the Conduct of one certain General, were always victorious, but without him always defeated; would it not be very just to impute the Successes of such an Army chiefly to his Courage and Conduct? But this is but a very imperfect Similitude to represent what I would have signified by it: The Influence of God Almighty, by his Grace, is so necessary to all our good Works, that it is literally true what our Saviour said to his Disciples, *John xv. 5. Without me ye can do nothing.* To give it you then in a more perfect Comparison: As a Branch when lopt off from the Tree, and so deprived of that Juice and Sap which comes from the Root, cannot bring forth Fruit of itself; no more can we, unless we adhere and cleave fast to God by Prayer, and the other
Means

Means of Grace, thereby drawing Grace continually from him, bring forth any good Fruit of good Works of ourselves; and therefore the chief Praise and Honour of them is due to him.

IV. I shall now in the last Place remove a Doubt or two, which rises from this Doctrine; but I shall very much contract what might be said upon this Head, in Regard to your Time and Patience.

1. *First* then, One Doubt rising from this Doctrine, is this: If we are to take Care to be very exemplary in good Works; and if in all our good Works we are directly to aim at the Honour and Glory of God, we shall be so taken up with continual Thoughts of God, that we shall neither have Time, nor be in any Capacity to mind the ordinary Business and Concerns of Life. To this I shall briefly answer these two Things. 1. That the Thoughts of God, and the habitual Designing of his Glory, is so far from being an Hindrance of Business, that it is a very great Furtherance of it; as keeping the Mind in a right Frame, and holding it to its streight Course, helps it in the Dispatch of its Affairs. Just as at Sea a careful Looking at the Compass, and steering exactly to the true Point to which the Course is shaped, is so far from being an Hindrance, that it is a mighty Furtherer of the Voyage; for if at any Time the Compass is not minded, and the Vessel is left to dance about, without being kept up to the true Point, every one knows there is just so much Time lost, and it will cost so much more to get in to the right Course again. 2. I answer, that provided the Mind be habitually set on God, and his Glory the Point to which we

steer, it is not necessary that we continually be actually employing our Thoughts about it. As in a Voyage, it is not necessary that the Thoughts be continually employed on the Port and Harbour to which we are bound; we may lawfully mind other Business, so that it be such Business as doth not hinder, but rather further the Voyage: Such as stopping the Leaks, mending the Sails, managing the Provisions, preparing the Guns to make a Defence against an Enemy; and especially the keeping of a good Reckoning, and looking out sharp to avoid Shelves, and Rocks, and Quicksands, and all other Dangers both attending the Voyage at Sea, and the Piloting right in to Harbour.

2. There is another Doubt I thought to have cleared; namely, how the Sight of our good Works is apt to excite Men to glorify God. But I find an exact Discussion of this Question would draw me out into a great Length. And therefore I shall content myself with a very short Answer, namely, that as the Sight of well-bred Children, who behave themselves exactly in all Points of Duty, is naturally apt to make Men have very honourable Thoughts of their Parents and Teachers; and as the Observation of a well disciplined Army, is naturally apt to give one honourable Thoughts of their General, and Superiour Officers; so the Sight of the good Works of Christians, is as apt to give the World a most honourable Idea of their Heavenly Father and Master; and is the readiest Way to bring in Profelytes to that holy Religion, which by his Doctrine and Example our Saviour planted in the World.

To conclude then ; let us shew the Sincerity of our Faith, by the Exemplariness of our Lives and Conversations. *Let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.* Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, let us render, as is due, all Praise, &c.

F I N I S.

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